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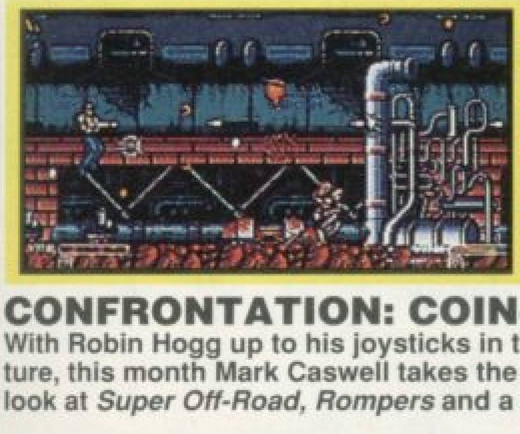
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The Games machine

IN THIS ISSUE...

REGULARS



All-formats review of Capcom's fabulous FORGOTTEN WORLDS
■ page 28

FEATURES

TGM — TELLING YOU LIKE IT IS

For those venerable gamesplayers among us who can remember forking out for an Atari VCS — "the complete games centre", and thrilling to the likes of the *Combat* cartridge or *Asteroids*, or the feeling when the pocket money ran out on £35-games, the current resurgence of consoles may seem like a joke in poor taste. And to add to the cynicism, you only have to ask "what happened to the Nintendo revolution?".

For almost two years we've heard rumours that this Christmas there will be nothing on the telly, nothing in the shops that won't be Nintendo — but indeed nothing; not even a flurry of games to support the non-too-spectacular sales of the machine. It's a bit sickening when you hear about the excitement in the States or Japan. And NEC, sitting on the hottest little property around to threaten Nintendo's hold, the PC Engine, seem to have forgotten Europe altogether. Sega hasn't, but it's still early days. And Konix remains an excitingly launched, but as yet unfitted out vessel.

So why is TGM getting worked up about consoles? Because there is every indication that they really are on the way this time. Nintendo may not be admitting it (why should they?) but there's little comercial sense in them releasing a 16-bit machine in the States when there is still such a lot of mileage to be got from their current 8-bit runaway success. Europe, however, undernourished, is ripe for the 16-bit attack, and no substantial 8-bit market to undermine. Sega have seen the light and are leading the way. The Mega Drive is here (albeit in tiny quantities) and sources close to the Japanese industry suggest that a 16-bit PC Engine won't be far behind.

How will this affect the home computer market? Well read Phil Harrison's report starting on page 16 and find out.

WIN!

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See page 26

CRUISER CRYSTAL!
Two winners make their own joysticks at the Joystick Factory and enjoy an afternoon at famous Alton Towers, plus Cruiser Crystal joysticks for the runners-up, courtesy of **POWERPLAY**
See page 65

AND...

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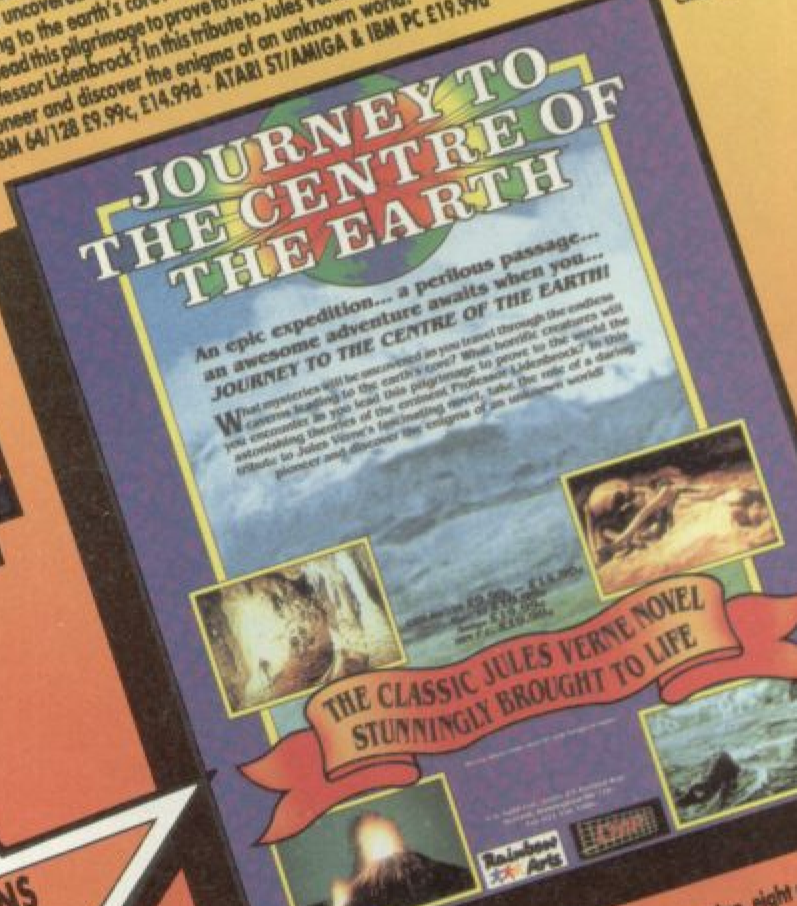
Check out page 80 to see what we've got for you this month on the TGM Hotline! Those great people from Thalamus, to celebrate their 16-bit launch of HAWKEYE on the Atari ST and Amiga, have stumped up some competition prizes. Don't hang around — get phoning!

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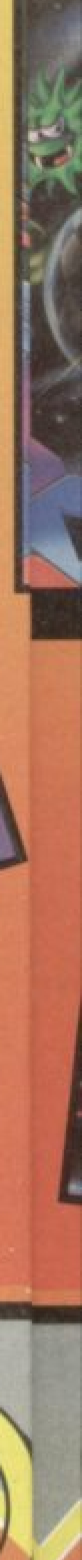
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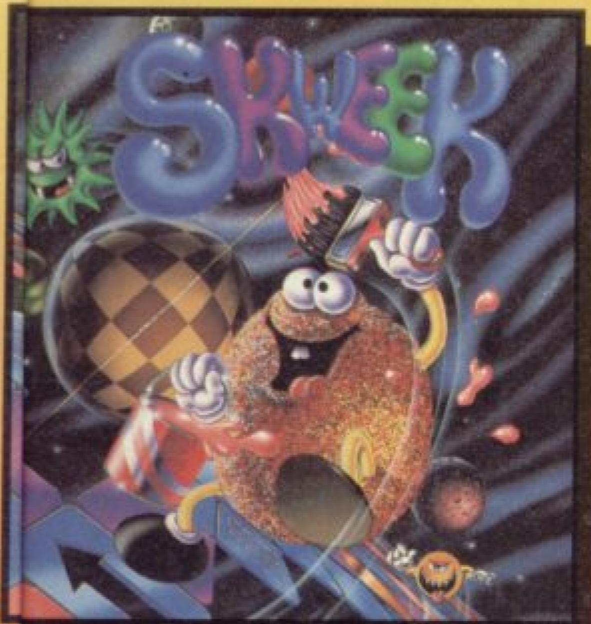
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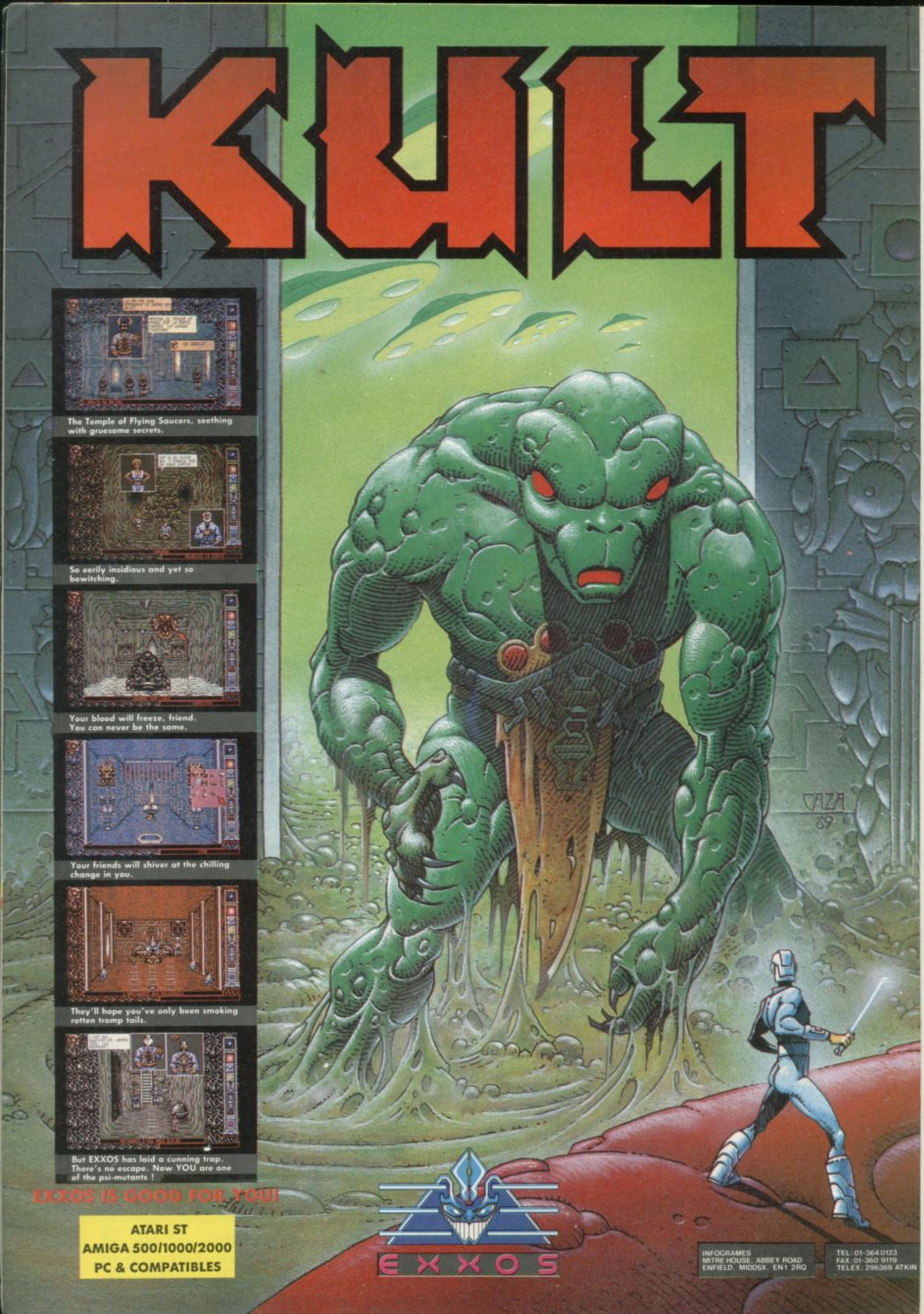
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TGM REPORT

Konix strengthen console as time rushes past

Exclusive by Barnaby Page

Konix have doubled the memory of their revolutionary Multi-System console – because worried software houses demanded it. But the release date has been set back to late September, and even so many developers are worried that they won't meet deadlines for the first games.

Konix's decision to upgrade the memory to 256K RAM should answer, one of the biggest criticisms that the first British-developed console has met. Though Konix insisted that a novel system of continuous disk access would make 128K RAM perfectly adequate (TGM**016**), many critics saw the measly memory as the Multi-System's fatal flaw.

Chris Green, one of the console's two key designers, explained to TGM that the move came after a major conference between Konix and software houses earlier this spring. 'We got so much pressure from all the software developers. What they want the extra memory for is to page the screens . . . it makes animation much easier.'

Access to the 3.5-inch disk simply wasn't fast enough for game animations, he said. 'You have to have RAM for that.'

Green assured potential buyers that, despite the expense of RAM chips, the move to 256K wouldn't up the price. 'The price has to stay fixed at £199,' he said. 'Basically, we have cut our margin [profit] to put the extra RAM in there.'



A port originally intended for cartridge games will now be used for an optional extra 512K – raising the question of whether the Multi-System will, like the ST, eventually suffer from some games demanding the extra memory and being unusable on standard machines.

Game delays

But even these technical improvements don't solve the biggest problem now facing Konix – time.

Software houses are apparently being asked to finish the first Multi-System games by August, but last month many had still not received the vital development system they'll need. Pete Stone – boss of Palace, which is considering *Barbarian* for the Konix console – observed 'I doubt we'd finish anything before the end of the year'.

The release date has already been set back about a month; Konix spokesman Michael Baxter emphasised that it's only a slight change, saying 'when we first mentioned it it was an August release date, now we're looking at the PC Show [September 27-October 1]'.

Indeed, some suggest that the console – first revealed by an exclusive TGM story last autumn – was rushed out for trade and press previews as quickly as possible after TGM broke the news and other magazines followed suit. They say Konix therefore didn't think the specification through thoroughly, and may only now be coming to grips with the inevitable problems of such a complex and innovative games machine.

Konix boss Wynford P Holloway was unavailable for comment.

Sega: yes, we have no Mega Drives . . .

Don't look for the 16-bit Sega before early 1990, UK representatives Virgin Mastertronic are warning gamers. The £150-odd machine simply won't make Britain in time.

Good news is that a £20 adapter will make the Mega Drive compatible with Sega Master System games . . . bad news is that Virgin Mastertronic boss Nick Alexander obviously can't count in Japanese.

Explaining why he'd put the brakes on the Mega Drive, Alexander told industry paper Computer Trade Weekly 'there's only three pieces of software available for it at the moment' – but TGM reviews four in this issue's console special!

■ The *Knightmare* continues as TV producers Broadsword team up with *Driller/Dark Side/Total Eclipse* team Incentive – for **The Satellite Game**, another mixture of live action and computer graphics along the lines of Anglia Television's award-winning *Knightmare*.

Starting early next year on British Satellite Broadcasting's Galaxy channel, the 30-episode *Satellite Game* will follow teams of young adventurers through a space-fantasy world of lasers, videos, and 3-D animation using Incentive's famous Freescape technique.

The scenario involves penetrating an alien satellite, which just goes to show that all this newfangled technology hasn't changed games one bit.

But it should be worth tuning in, for among those up in the air with *The Satellite Game* is designer Robert Harris, of *Knightmare*'s famous animation team The Travelling Matte Company.

Just one problem – when British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB) launches its first programs in September, to pick up any of them you'll need the Squarial receiver plus a receiver box, for a total cost of about £250.



■ **Oxfam** plan to raise money for Third World problems by selling old games. So they're asking us all to donate 'any games, leisure or home computing software', for any make of micro, in preparation for a month of sales through Oxfam's London shops starting June 27. Hardware and peripherals are welcome too.

Donations can be made at any of Oxfam's 900 shops nationwide during June and July; for further information, contact the charity's Appeals Manager Richard English ☎ (01) 585-0220.

■ Now the bad news from **Prestel** – March's budget means that all online services are subject to VAT. That adds 15% to all charges, including subscriptions and connect time. The money-grabbing started April 1; Prestel subscribers should have received a letter about it, and information is also available on *Prestel-VAT#.

SAM delayed to September

by Barnaby Page

Major changes to Miles Gordon Technology's SAM Coupe project mean the Spectrum-compatible micro will go in high-street shops this September – not May, despite MGT's hopes earlier this year.

Originally planned to be sold largely through mail order, the from-£150 machine (full specs in TGM**014**) will now go straight to chains and independent retailers.

But MGT boss Alan Miles warned that availability may be limited at first. 'There is a finite capacity to which we can build in the first few months,' he told TGM. And before serving the general public, MGT will have to fulfil some 3,000 orders from users of their other products (mostly Spectrum peripherals).

Defending the decision to go through shops instead of MGT Direct, the company's soon-to-be-dismantled mail-order system, Miles emphasised that SAM will still be backed up with quality service. 'We've learned in the mail-order market to act quickly and deal with customers,' he said.

With many computer problems, Miles alleges, 'the manufacturer is often the last person to hear about it, and that's why there are so many faults'. But by dealing directly with the shops, Miles hopes to 'break the chain' of distributors and other intermediaries that often separates hardware manufacturers from their customers.

Soft touch

One major problem facing any new micro is software – without a decent range, the machine is unattractive and useless. So software development for SAM starts at the beginning of June, when 50 prototypes and development tools will be sent to major software houses.

And final testing of the hardware kicks off in July, when 200 finished machines will be sent to retailers and selected users to be put through its paces. 'We really want to give the machine a hammering and make sure we've got everything covered,' said Miles.

SAM has 256K RAM, a 64-colour palette with Amiga-style HAM mode allowing all colours to be onscreen at once, and seven-channel sound – a substantial improvement on existing 8-bit micros.

■ *MGT's new disk drives work with all machines: see Toolbox in Back Bytes, page 86*

Amiga tops the bill this June

Not surprisingly, the Amiga looks set to dominate at next month's Commodore Show, with everything from BASIC to the Bitmap Brothers on display.

The Bitmaps, authors of *Xenon* and *Speedball* and arguably the hippest coders about, will join *Starglider* creator/TGM diarist Jez San at a workshop for aspiring games writers. Also there will be System 3's Stan Schembri.

But the show – which runs from June 2 to 4 at the Novotel Exhibition Complex, Hammersmith, London – is particularly strong on utilities.

Star of the event, graphically, should be **Power Computing**'s *Video Magic* package – grab an image, add sound, animation and titles, and save the lot on disk or video.

Artists, animators and DTP designers will also find ready-made inspiration in the *Media Line* series from **George Thompson Services**: three different disks provide anim backgrounds, clip art for DTP, and extra fonts.

And public-domain software suppliers **Jumpdisk** will have the latest screen marvels from America, including 'the most incredible HAM pictures plus the first preview of a comic on a disk'.

Program power

Other software promises include a couple from **HiSoft** – *Extend*, which is a routine library for their BASIC, and a professional developer's version of *Devpac*. HiSoft's David Link also hints at 'exciting news for C programmers' . . .

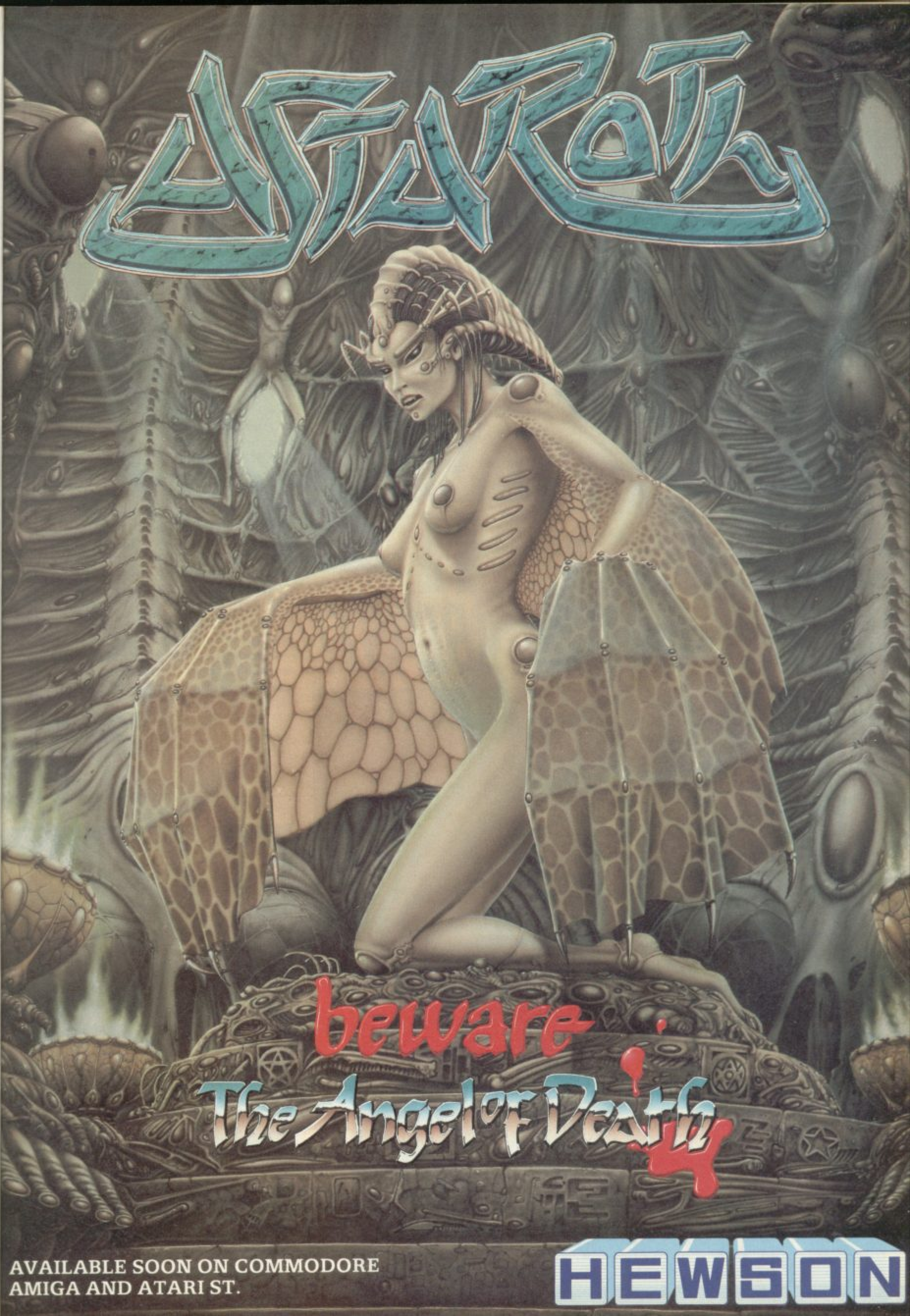
Meanwhile, **Arnor** will have the latest version of *Protext* (TGM**018**), while **Kuma Computers** offer the £49.95 *K-Data* database and £49.95 *K-Roget* thesaurus.

And the show also seems strong on hardware. Among the promises: expansion boards and extra floppy drives from **MAST**, the Ami . . . Alignment System for floppy drive heads from **George Thompson Services**, and a range from **Power Computing** including hard disks, a 5.25-inch Amiga-and-PC-compatible floppy drive, and 68030 accelerator cards.

Siren Software will have the £39.99 Amiga Soundblaster, a stereo amplifier with two speakers; and C64 owners aren't neglected, for **Palan** will be continuing to push the old favourite Load-It data recorder, also £39.99.

Finally, there'll also be daily question-and-answer sessions with those long-established gurus of the Commodore scene, ICPUG (Independent Commodore Products User Group).

■ Further information: contact Database Exhibitions, *Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP* ☎ (0625) 878888.



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TGM PREVIEWS



Xenon II – it's a *MEGABLAST!*

Impressively packed with 'surprising special effects' and a 'very hot soundtrack', the next release from Imageworks could be only one thing – the latest Bitmap Brothers game, and the sequel to the tremendously successful *Xenon*. Yes, it's *Xenon II – Megablast*. It seems that all your hard work in the original game was for nothing, as the world has return to its sorry state of affairs that existed when you first set out on your battle with the Xenites. But this time the Xenites have a secret weapon: a device that allows time travel. With this they have placed time bombs in each major era with which they will destroy past enemies, and thus control their own future.

With the lure of REAL cash you decide to help the Xenites in their quest for total world and time domination.

Xenon II is 25% wider onscreen and 50% larger in play area, with three-layer parallax scrolling over land and seascapes.

Expect *Xenon II – Megablast* this summer from Imageworks, on the ST (pictured), Amiga and PC. ●



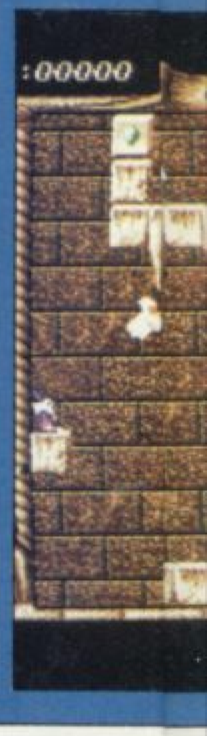


Balls out for In

Düsseldorf-based Rainbow Arts, renowned for such great shoot-'em-ups as *Denaris* and *Sarcophaser*, have a wizard up their sleeve for their next release, *Spherical* – available on ST, Amiga, C64 and PC in June.

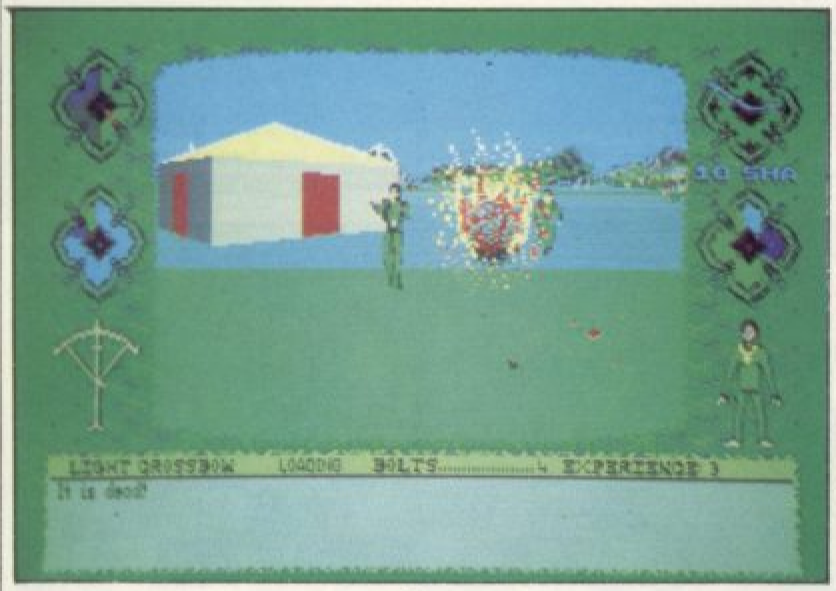
As the spell-casting soothsayer, you take control of a magical sphere which must be guided through a maze-like dangerous fantasy world. Various objects and spells can be picked up along the way; all help in your progress across the level.

Spherical features both single and two-player modes; in the latter a friend takes control of a magical witch. The fantasy-style graphics are accompanied by ten different soundtracks.



S

SLEEPING GODS LIE



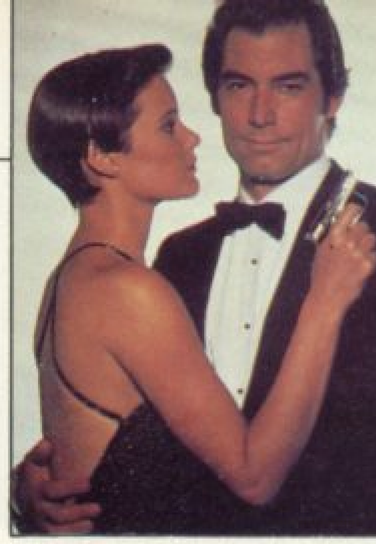
Empire say they **WON'T** let their games lie quiet, for *Sleeping Gods Lie* has already been received warmly by the TGM crew who saw Oxford Digital Enterprises' latest blockbuster in April.

It's primarily released on the ST, followed closely by the Amiga version, with PC and C64 formats later in the year – and judging by the success of ODE's *Hunt For Red October*, this should be one to stay awake for. *Sleeping Gods Lie* is set in the mythical world of Tessara, a world which has been abandoned by the gods that created it and left in the hands of the people. These gentlefolk have been viciously suppressed by the much-hated Chief Wizard, who uses demons to enforce his power on the people. The people have only one hope, a sleeping god – situated kingdoms away – who must be awoken to handle the crisis.

You've drawn the short straw, and must trek through eight kingdoms, over 60+ landscapes, and past numerous foes despatched by the Archmage who don't take too kindly to visitors.

Like the play area, the sprites are massive and all add to the strongly-strategical atmosphere, as you listen to rumours, acquire weapons and act on instinct – it's the only way to survive!

Double-oh trouble for Domark



Bond is back, and this time he's **BAD**. In fact, he's so bad he's had his double-'0' status revoked, and is ordered to keep out of the CIA's affairs. But he's more involved in this mission than M realises, and there's no stopping Bond in Domark's game of the film *Licence To Kill*.

The game closely follows the film's plot, featuring all the most memorable scenes from the action-packed big-screen extravaganza. But it's still a secret as to whether Carey Lowell (pictured, with Timothy Dalton), who plays voluptuous military pilot Pam Bouvier, will be in the computer version!

Expect versions for all major formats in June, along with the silver-screen version.



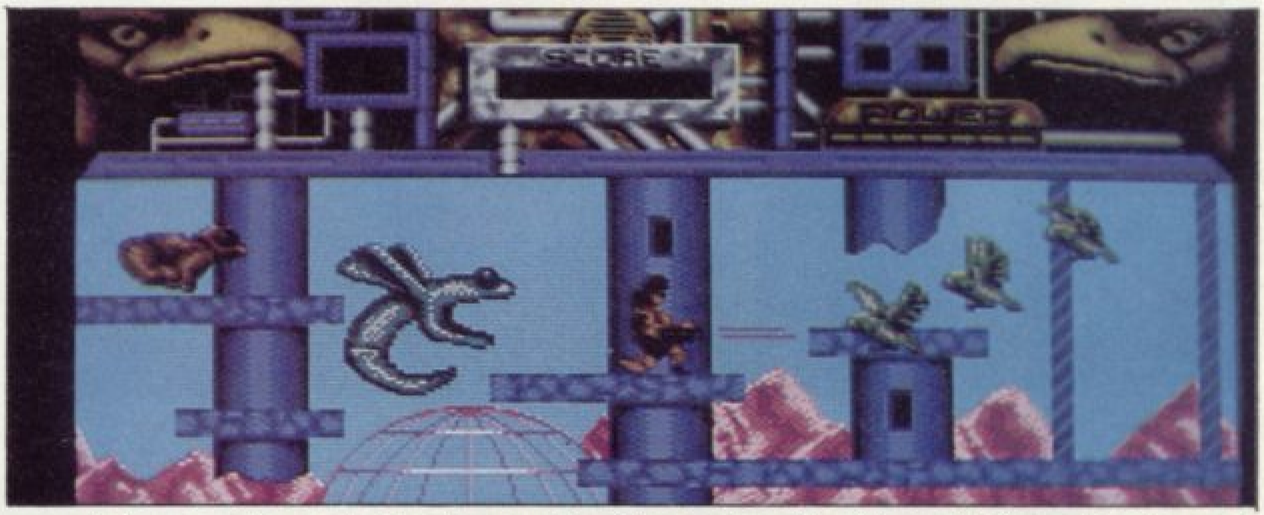
TIME SCANNER More Sega fare from Activision this month as *Time Scanner* is finally released on all formats – following its TV appearance on *Motormouth*!

The classic pinball game will have all the features of the arcade hit with a few extras.

r Rnbow Arts



HAWKEYE HAWKEYE



Thalamus, who created a storm on the Commodore 64 with such hits as *Sanxion* and *Armalyte*, are now releasing their hit shoot-'em-up *Hawkeye* for the Amiga and ST. It's frenetic action as you, and your trusty armoury of four guns, trek through a desolate landscape roamed by mutating creatures.

Three of your guns soon run out of ammunition, so be sure to pick up everything in sight. Getting four parts of a shattered access card, allows you to pass into the next of 12 landscapes. Priced at £19.99, *Hawkeye* should be out now. *(Amiga screen.)*

A change for the beastlier

Sega have once again found themselves on the home micro via the helpful hand of Activision. The latest Sega conversion is *Altered Beast*, the violent and addictive arcade smash of last summer.

The horizontally-scrolling play area contains numerous weird creatures, all of which must be punched into eternity. Kill enough of the strange creatures, pick up their spirit balls, and you'll have enough

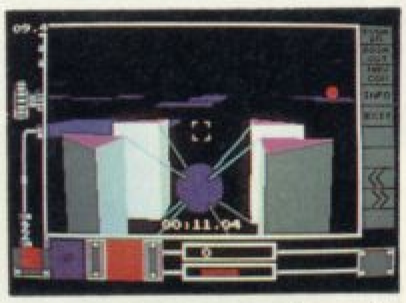


power to metamorphose into one of several beasts – each with a killer clout. Major versions should be out in August.

INTERPHASE

Journey to the edge of Dreamtime with Imageworks' *Interphase*. In the future people plug into a dream machine to get their kicks – kicks that come from the minds of a chosen all-powerful few.

You were one of those people, but realised the serious undertones of the dreams you were creating for The Corporation and promptly left. However, many people are still being effected by the dreams and it's up to you to enter The World Mainframe and rescue



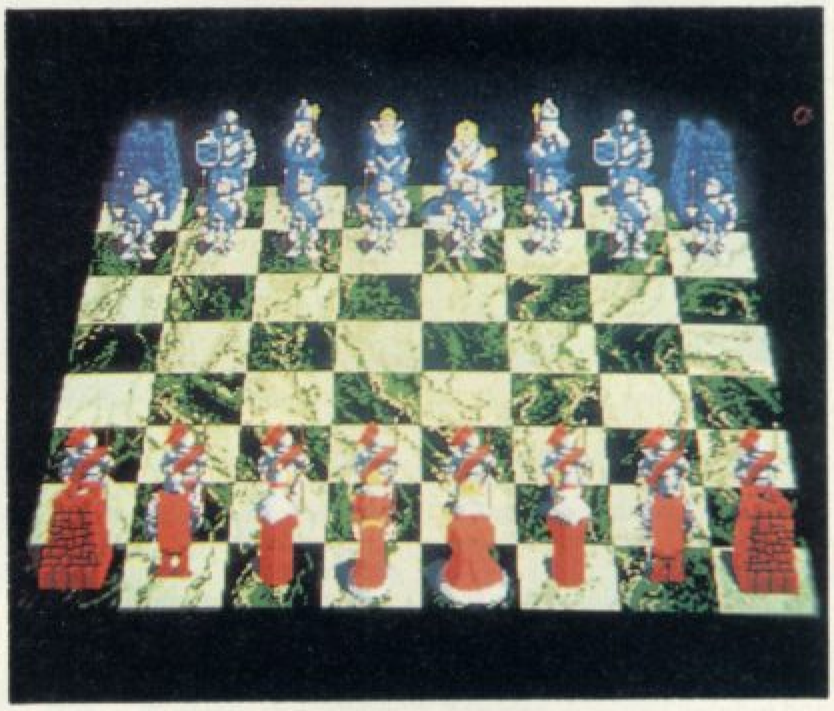
the minds of millions of people, before they are twisted for ever . . .

Enter the fantasy zone soon, on the Amiga, ST and PC. *(ST screen.)*

BATTLE CHESS

The most charming chess game for the Amiga is now being translated to the ST. Interplay's Battle Chess gained 83% from TGM when we reviewed the Amiga version last year, and the imminent ST version should do similarly well – although the original did have 40K of sampled sound.

Despite playing a mentally tough game, Battle Chess also plays tough physically – the characters literally remove each other from the board. However, the faint-hearted can play a 2-D game without all the leg-breaking, arm-twisting, head-bashing . . .



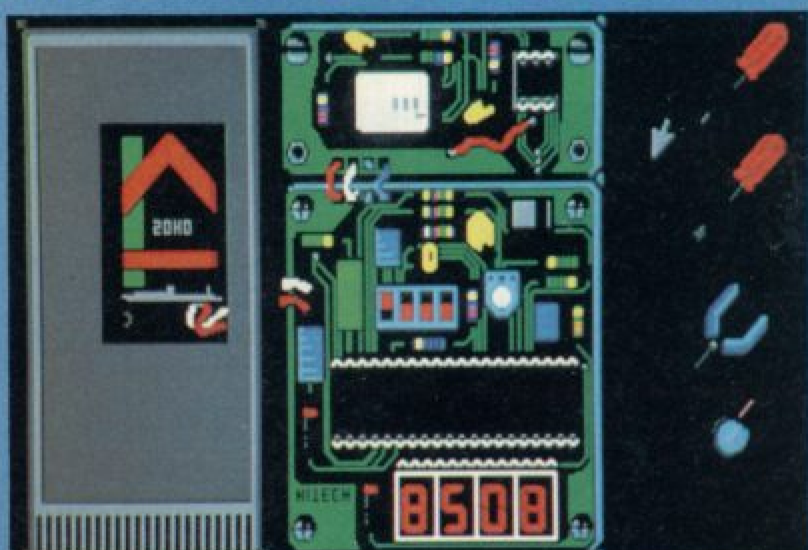
MURDERS IN VENICE

Cobra Soft are back with a bite – and this time the French adventure giants visit the mysterious streets and romantic canals of Venice, the setting of their latest murder puzzle.

But *Murders In Venice* is more than just a whodunit, for it's no secret that the ultimate solution involves locating – and defusing – a lethal time bomb.

And veterans of the previous Cobra Soft *Murder* games, about as popular in France as Agatha Christie is over here, will welcome the host of features designed to make *Murder In Venice* an investigation with a difference.

There's an onscreen notebook where you can record details of who you've met (and save them even if you lose the game!), and a camera for collecting digitised photos





suspects.

Two subgames add depth to the challenge. Actually defusing the bomb is a nerve-racking process, for as time ticks by you've got to pick up tools, use them correctly and figure out how the jumble of electronic components works.

More relaxing amusement comes with the character editor, where you can alter your own digitised image – it's like an art utility within an adventure.

Packed with clues and packaged with an entertaining collection of objects, all necessary to solve the mystery, *Murders In Venice* looks like a must for adventurers who'd like a break from forests and goblins. Look for release from Infogrames on ST and Amiga in May, with PC likely to follow. *(ST screens.)*


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They're back again, and this time to stay, the hardware makers say. Bigger, better, faster, more colourful and louder, the very best thing for ardent gamesplayers, 8-bit Japanese consoles have swept America and are now poised for the attack on Europe with all 16-bits firing. So far only Sega's Mega Drive is 16-bit, but Nintendo aren't far behind and a 16-bit PC Engine should be with us soon. Phil Harrison gives the lowdown on the mustering forces of the rising sun, while Robin Hogg and Warren Lapworth examine the games for various consoles (including the aging Atari 2600, which is fighting back) to find out whether the software justifies the means in this second....

Console Dawn

The British games world is a tiny part of a global market dominated by all things Japanese. It is often said that Nintendo have failed in their attempt to take over the UK — but perhaps the real reason is that they just can't be bothered to operate in such a restricted and small market for very little gain.

With luck, the advent of 1992 and the free market will make the Japanese think more seriously about selling their products here. For the Japanese have, without a doubt, the most powerful and exciting products in the world of computer entertainment. As TGM has reported in the past, machines like the little PC Engine and the 16-bit Sega Mega Drive are available in Tokyo at the moment, with growing software and peripheral support — so we can only hope that the machines come over here with complete, quality catalogue of products all ready for release.

Unfortunately, past experience with Nintendo products does little to justify the ideal. They are currently releasing some product into Europe that is years old — and looks it to!

When talking to the Japanese about their UK marketing policies, the standard response is 'Great Britain — oh yes, I know, that tiny island off the coast of Europe — speak American over there, don't they?'. Namco are typical of the Japanese when it comes to the order of marketing: Japan and the Far East first, the North American continent next, and Europe last (if we're lucky).

It's a shame we get treated this way — the UK software houses are the first to slap their chequebooks down on the table for the hottest arcade licences, often long before the machines themselves hit these shores. And the same is true of console games.

NEC act as if they aren't that bothered about worldwide sales of their PC Engine; indeed, they came under fire in Japan for marketing the console as an alternative to Nintendo, not as the vastly better machine it clearly is. Reports differ as to the true number of Nintendo consoles worldwide, but it's definitely in the tens of millions, whereas the PC Engine is lucky to have scraped into seven-figure sales yet in Japan. When it comes to economics, the Nintendo is the one that's going to get the software support over all others. So even though the PC Engine has twice the number of colours and a CD-ROM drive, it's never going to have the market presence to beat Nintendo.

No no Nintendo

There is another factor to consider: the restrictive practices of Nintendo when it comes to software. They hold all control over product and its shipping date, releasing it under their own label. There have been horror stories about product not being shipped for months after completion — even when the developer has paid in advance for 200,000 cartridges and packaging costs. It's rumoured that a couple of UK software houses have had their fingers burnt this way.

Other UK developers have been saying recently that Nintendo is an 8-bit machine not worth worrying about here. It's basically too late for the UK software houses to get into the huge market anyway — things change fast, and as usual the majority of us got left behind in the rush.

So it's obvious why most UK publishers have reacted so favourably to the Konix Multi-System. Perhaps for a change we can have the head start over the Japanese. It would be nice to see Konix burn into Japan in a couple of years' time, with a replete catalogue of European-developed software and peripherals.

And there's no reason the Brits shouldn't do it this time. Technically and creatively, the UK development teams rate with the best in the world — it's just that a Japanese Nintendo programmer would laugh at the suggestion of spending eight months writing a game for the Spectrum, regardless of how good the end result might be.

Perhaps the problem is that the UK market has traditionally been dominated by keyboard machines — a knock-on effect from the work done in schools with the BBC computers back in the early Eighties.

Many people are saying that the time is right for the market to change over to the dedicated games console. Both Atari and

"The Japanese have, without a doubt, the most powerful and exciting products in the world of computer entertainment"

SEGA MEGA DRIVE

Altered Beast

Activison have the rights to the computer conversions but the Mega Drive game *IS* the coin-op in nearly all respects. A move away from previous 3-D coin-ops, this time it's horizontally scrolling beat-'em-up action with a twist.

The daughter of a great god-like being has been kidnapped by an evil sorcerer. One or two heroes are brought back from the dead to fight their way through the sorcerer's legions of undead creatures to rescue the daughter.

A graveyard is the setting for the first of the five levels, with rotting zombies, grave guardians and winged demons rising to the challenge of beating the undead heroes to a pulp.

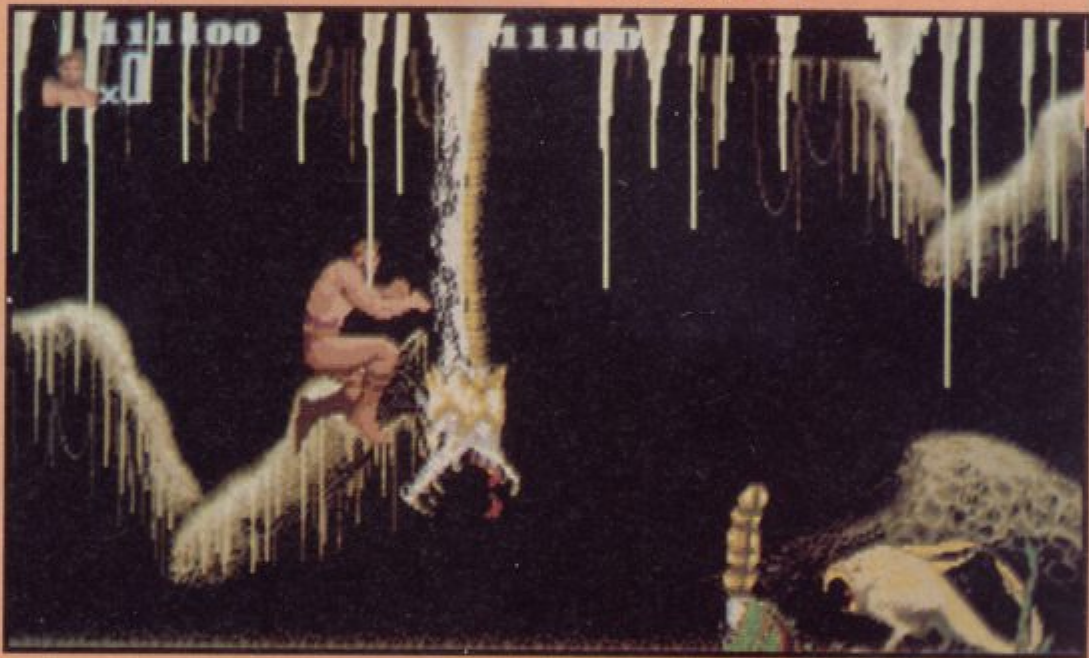
Most of these long-dead lovelies require a good few punches or kicks to send them six foot under (again). But kill an albino wolf and you get a power capsule which provides that extra bit of punch power. Collect two more and the hero transforms into a werewolf blessed with super powers.

But things don't always run smoothly even for werewolves and other altered beasts — the sorcerer pops up at this point and turns into Mega-nasties, each a graphical treat and with their own unique attack patterns.

Other than an Elmer Fudd-esque sample of speech at the start ('Wise fwom yaw gwave...'), *Altered Beast* turns out very close indeed to its arcade origins, complete with two-player mode (the 8-bit Sega version suffered enormously without it). The main characters and enemy sprites look ever so slightly washed out, but the detail is all there, and background graphics are spot on.

The gameplay is a natural for the Sega even though it's hardly original — likewise the action is sedate compared with *Space Harrier 2* and *Super Thunder Blade*, but *Altered Beast* is a coin-op conversion to the letter — and that can't be bad.

TGM rating 87%



Commodore are making console versions of their 16-bit computers — technically identical to the original ST or Amiga, but without keyboard. It was always said from the start that Commodore should never have attempted to sell the Amiga as a business computer. The Amiga is a very powerful games computer, and should have been sold as one — with a price tag to match. So perhaps both Atari and Commodore have lost the initiative and will gain little from the console versions. Wait and see...

Industry sources are talking now of a complete turnaround in the market within three years: today's major 8-bit software houses will live off budget games, somewhere in the sub-£5 range, while full-price games software will be dominated by console product from here and overseas, with expensive simulator-type product restricted to the high-end PC-compatible yuppie market. The ST and Amiga machines will fit uncomfortably somewhere between the high-end games market and the low-end simulator market.

Accurate or not, these suggestions seem to mean good news for the dedicated games-player, with the exciting possibility of many titles on a wide range of quality consoles.

The right price

The sole variable, unfortunately, is price. Out in Japan you can buy a brand-new Nintendo for something in the range of £35-£60. A PC Engine costs under £85 (much less than it does here), and the new Sega Mega Drive 16-bit machine is amazingly under £100. British shops will have to stay as close to these prices as possible.

"It would be nice to see Konix burn into Japan in a couple of years' time, with a replete catalogue of European-developed software and peripherals"

The Sega machine is rumoured to be coming onto the streets by late autumn (they said that last year, too! — it was supposed to be at the Earls Court PC Show, but magically never turned up). And it could really stomp in at Christmas if its UK distributors (Virgin Mastertronic) get the marketing and price correct. Out in Japan they advertised the Mega Drive and a game on prime-time TV (when it wasn't even Christmas), and that's what's needed here to really get the market stimulated into buying something again — let's get back to the days when good games sold 100,000, not just ten times less if you're lucky!

Perhaps the Konix console will have double effect if it's a success. Firstly, the satisfaction that Europe and the UK can do just as well as Japan, thank you very much. Secondly, and more importantly, it will prove that the UK is a serious arena in which to sell consoles, and worthy of investment by the big Japanese firms. This will result in a war of price and performance which can only mean better machines and games for the consumers — us.

The costs of producing high-performance consoles capable of complex games are going to drop dramatically as soon as the problem of world DRAM chips sorts itself out.

The limiting factor is memory and its costs. As graphic resolution and colours increase, so does the memory required to display them. A complete screen of graphics on a C64 takes at worst 10K to hold in memory. On the Amiga and similar machines, a screenfull can easily take upwards of 32K. Combine this with the fact that a good game could have many screens full of graphics and sprites, and memory runs out very fast — and don't forget the digitised sound effects and music, the carefully programmed gameplay... all eating memory.

An exciting time is ahead in the next five years, when memory is no longer a factor: money can be spent developing consoles with transputer processors, capable of multitasking millions of instructions every second. Hardware with built-in commands for 3-D graphics effects, outputs to drive complex interactive add-ons, networked machines for true role-playing adventures, digital outputs to your hi-fi for true audiovisual experience... the possibilities are endless and the prospects for the player look better and better.

Winning runners

But once again it is down to the marketing people to sell the product. Many times in the past, quality machines have appeared and disappeared as quickly again, through bad marketing and consequently little support from the public and the software

SEGA MEGA DRIVE

Alex Kidd in Miracle World

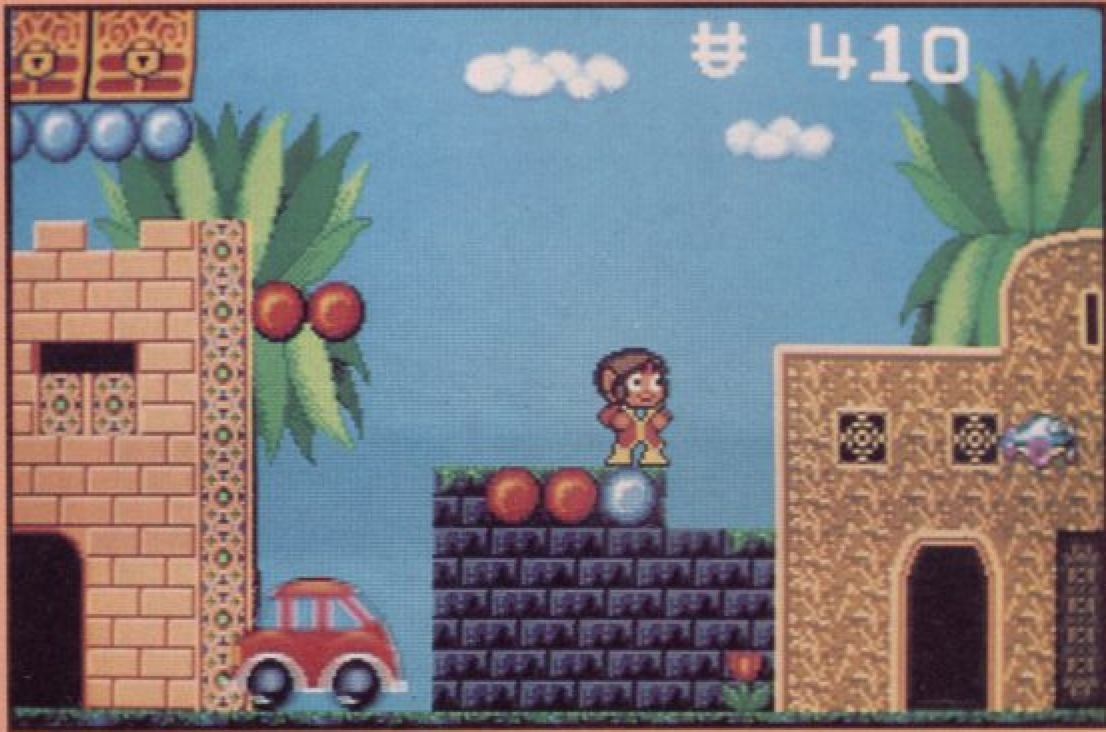
Nintendo may have Mario but Sega have little Alex Kidd, an endearingly cute fellow resembling a monkey in a red suit. Fresh from his travels on the 8-bit Sega, Alex pops up on the Mega Drive, fresh faced and ready for action — platforms and ladders action as it turns out.

If we could read Japanese we'd provide a paragraph or two about the plot but Japanese isn't one of TGM's strongpoints and so Alex is doomed to wander through Miracle World without purpose.

Very much in classic *Super Mario Brothers* style, Alex's quest is to penetrate the King's fortress on the other side of Miracle World.

Alex is intially armed with an unfeasibly large fist and a powerful karate kick. Using these to despatch the nasties to the great afterlife is the name of the game, but so too is collecting coins and other treasures.

Coins make the world go round and with them Alex can participate in Janken games for a cost (scissors/paper/stone to us non-orientals) with a motley bunch of characters, prizes for winning being useful extra objects which include a pedal-power helicopter, motorbike and a pogo stick for novel ways of transportation. A crooked stick is the most useful, allowing Alex to float through the air for a limited period only.



Alex wanders through forests, villages, pyramids, swims an ocean, floats through the air and leaps from platform to platform with breathtaking athleticism.

The enemies are ever cute and include rocks with faces, jolly scorpions, bloater fish and other weird organisms of a true Japanese style. With a distinctly *Super Mario Brothers* flavour, the action is simple to start with (later levels turning real nasty as the layouts get ever more complex).

houses.

With a console, however, the marketing is simplified in that you have a target market (games-players only) and don't have to justify high prices with talk of business uses! IBM have consistently been top PC sellers worldwide, not through prices (they are among the most expensive machines available) but through convincing the public that their machines are the best and most reliable (not really true on either count). It is quality marketing that makes IBM machines a success.

Another force to help the sales and market presence of a machine is support from software houses. After all, a computer is only as good as the software that runs on it. Consoles have one further problem, in that when you turn them on nothing happens unless a disk or a cartridge is in place — there is no user interface in the operating system.

The upshot of this is that the only way the user sees the machines' capabilities is through the games developed by the software houses. The console manufacturers therefore need to have the software developers on their side, and give them technical support.

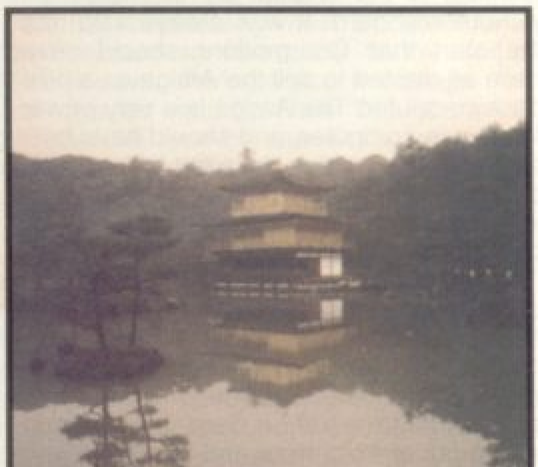
Software availability is another major selling point: no-one is going to buy a console with no software for it. This is why the Sega 8-bit system has sold better in this country than any other console — Sega managed to push the latest titles quickly into Mastertronic's hands.

And any successful console must have the latest arcade conversions available for it, though it's unlikely Sega will ever see their coin-ops on the Nintendo!

Soon enough the market is going to see the gap between the quality of coin-op product and console conversions decrease. This is going to have the effect of whittling out the smaller fish in the arcade market and pushing the big five (Sega, Namco, Taito etc) into producing more interactive and exhilarating games that are really worth the money per go — Namco's forthcoming release of Winning Run is going to be probably the first in a line of in-depth and accurate product that has the detail to take arcade gaming another step forward.

The console revolution is not over yet — and we're all going to be affected by it. TGM will report from the front line and send dispatches as the battle rages.

■ Phil Harrison is a games designer with Vivid Image Developments.





The modern bustle of Tokyo (right) may be where the console games genius comes from, but the inspiration for cute characters and backgrounds springs from quieter and more romantic situations (above)

Japanese photographs by Phil Harrison

SEGA MEGA DRIVE



Secret rooms can be revealed by trial and error and the odd well placed kick at chests reveals extra lives, objects — or time bombs if you're unlucky.

The sonics befit each scene; action among the Pyramids, for instance, is accompanied by a superb Eqyptian piece.

Alex faces killer cars, planes, mad axe-men, monkeys, fish in underwater scenes and angry airships up in clouds. Alex leaps from crag to crag, platform to platform, runs around, swims through the seas and floats through the air with the greatest of ease.

It goes without saying that *Alex Kidd* is highly playable and incredibly addictive. It's a tough cookie game to crack what with Janken games and both vertical and horizontal scrolling levels to pose problems. The Mega Drive is given a chance to show off with well detailed graphics, a superb two-direction parallax scrolling effect and all brought together in the most playable of forms.

TGM rating 82%

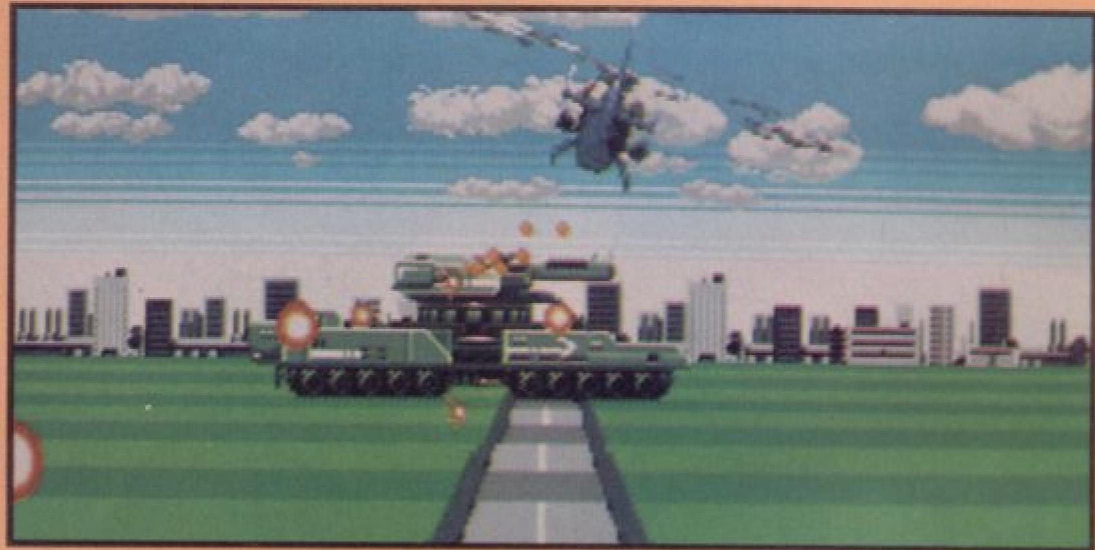
Super Thunder Blade

Sega sneakily rework their coin-op hit to create a 'new' game following the antics of the *Thunder Blade* chopper in the arcades. The look-down sections, not surprisingly, prove to be bread and butter for the Mega Drive, but lack a 3-D effect. Where the Mega Drive really has to work, namely in the 3-D sections, the game doesn't fare so well. Layered graphics move past with more than enough speed about them, but thet're just too fluid — buildings in particular stand firm with all the realism of jelly.

Despite these problems the game as a whole moves along incredibly smoothly accompanied by a sense of perspective which is convincing, while aircraft, tank, ship, and helicopter sprite are excellent.

Not quite as super as the title makes out, *Super Thunder Blade* nonetheless proves a playable, if tough, shoot-'em-up. The pace and challenge is enough to test the mettle of many an arcade expert.

TGM rating 76%



NINTENDO

Rush'n'Attack

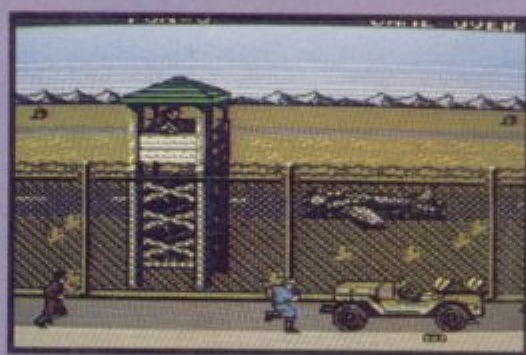
Two-player games are always in vogue on the consoles, the Nintendo more so with games like *Rush'n'Attack*. A two-player *Green Beret* may not aspire to be original or indeed progressive, but *Rush'n'Attack* certainly aims to be playable.

Two Green Berets are sent into the Russian (or should that be Rush'n'?) motherland to initiate arms reductions of a violent kind. Parachuting into the first complex, they get out their knives to spike the oncoming Reds. With a siren blaring, the enemy attacks. Rocket launchers are carelessly left around by the adversaries so pick them up and return the ammunition to sender the easy way.

The enemy have improved their defences since the first attack — now six levels include submarine pens, air base, warehouses and of course the prison. High-kicking cossacks, rabid dogs, jet-copters, pistol-toting officers all pack a mighty military punch. But then, Green Berets have nothing to fear.

The animation and use of colour isn't as good as it might have been, the backdrops have good detail but soldier sprites are bland. As ever Nintendo have made the game an always playable one, and *Rush'n'Attack* relies largely on the great two-player action to overcome its not-so-hot in-game appearance. Ignore the ethics and get blasting those Russians!

TGM rating 81%



Super Mario Bros 2

The Bros. gang are back (no, not Matt, Luke and Craig) with Mario and Luigi joining up with a couple of friends in the sequel to the game which needs no introduction. The nasty King Wart is up to no good and needs defeating fast, otherwise its curtains for the population under his warty rule.

Mario and Luigi can't kill Wart all by themselves, Toad and Princess Toadstool are also in the gang, each character having their own attributes, but Mario is the best all-rounder (well he'd have to be, wouldn't he?).

The gang have adopted super strengths, performing super jumps and picking up not only objects but monsters as well to throw all over the place. And in the grass are objects to throw, potions to open bonus screen doorways into secret sub-levels where bonus items await., even mushrooms for much needed extra lives. The characters now have an energy level reduced through contact, a more lenient system of survival, but like *Super Mario Brothers 1* it can all go wrong with one false step.

Many of the secret rooms are well hidden and you really have to try everywhere

PRESS ANY KEY

SEGA MEGA DRIVE

Space Harrier 2

No console is complete without a version of *Space Harrier*, especially a Sega console. The Fantasy Land has fallen foul of the Dark Harrier's tyranny and in Part 2 the Space Harrier is sent in to recover the land from evil in the only way he knows how — mass shoot-'em-up action.

Space Harrier 2 is made up of 13 stages of surreal non-stop blasting. Any of the first 12 stages can be selected at the start, but to get to the final stage all stages must be completed beforehand.

Like all *Space Harrier* games the graphic detail is what it's all about and using the 16-bit's power, brilliantly coloured, defined and animated graphics flash past at speeds approaching, if not equalling coin-op standard. But it's with the arrival of the end-stage guardians that the Mega Drive really gets to dazzle — very weird and utterly vicious, the Guardians move with an astonishing smoothness and zero flicker. Seeing is believing!

Space Harrier 2 is a significant advance on the existing Space Harrier games in graphic and sonic quality as well as overall presentation. The speed of the game is insanely fast (in keeping with the classic coin-op's style), the graphics and the way they are handled are all excellent, and the ferocity of enemy attacks makes other versions look positively passive.

The combination of all these things makes *Space Harrier 2* a truly awesome piece of coding.

TGM rating 85%



AND STILL TO COME...

The amazing thing about the Mega Drive is that the above four titles are relatively old and came out when the Mega Drive was launched. The results should be nothing short of stunning when programmers get to grips with the machine. Watch out for:

Power Drift
Super League
Rambo III (Provisional title)
Out Run 3-D
Fantasy Zone 2
Super Hang On
World Cup Soccer
Baseball Competition
Afterburner

NINTENDO

Super Mario Bros 2

to find them. Certain impassable walls can be destroyed by throwing bombs at them.

Part 2 kicks off with a brief vertical section before returning to the more familiar style of progression from left to right. The objective is the door at level's end which is often locked (go down into a jar to find the key but watch out for Phanto!). Birdo awaits the hero at the end of each level spitting eggs and fireballs, if you're quick you can pick the egg up and throw it back! At the end of the third stage Mouser awaits and only a bomb or three can see you through to the next world.

Dreamland is made up of seven worlds, each split into three sub-levels including both the more familiar horizontal levels and vertical levels aplenty. Quicksand regions, sand pits, caverns and waterfalls are all to be found within. Flying carpets can be ridden, or why not hitch a lift on a monster to cross large chasms, it's truly amazing what the Mario gang can do and find among the seven worlds.

To say that *Super Mario Brothers 2* is playable is like saying the Cray X-MP is quite a fast machine — the game redefines the word 'playable' and is far and away a major leap over the original. It's involved, deceptively tricky, has major improvements in the graphics and sonics league, and, most importantly of all, is superlative fun to play.

TGM rating 92%





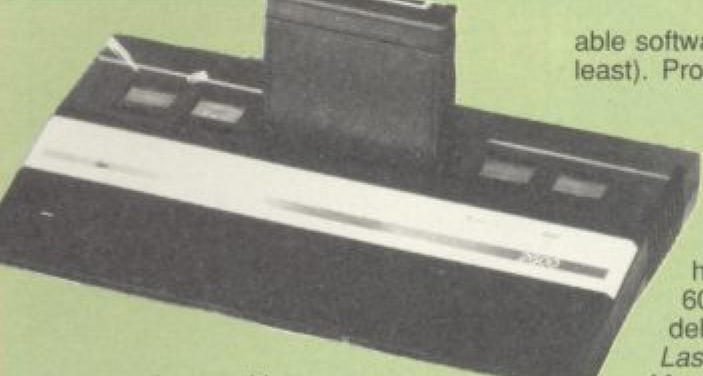
Ghosts 'n'G

Arthur the knight may be currently battling with *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* in the arcades but on the Nintendo he's still got problems dating three years back when he went out to save the fairest of princesses from the evilest of nasty creatures. *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* kicks off with a nice introductory screen as the Great Demon appears, picks up the princess and verily whisks her away. (Why though is Arthur half undressed in this section? We have a right to know!)

Arthur's quest begins in the spooky graveyard where nothing but a mouse stirs, at least for two seconds before the zombies emerge from six foot under. Armed with multiple flying swords, Arthur can despatch the zombies back to from whence they came and even pick up treasure while he's there. The zombies it seems are thick, they sometimes carry weapons but neglect to use them on our hero. So much the better, and provided it's not a useless weapon like the torch, Arthur can put it to good use.

If he gets hit (very likely) off goes his shiny armour leaving him with nothing between his skin and the cold wind but a

ATARI 2600



The machine that started the whole console business off (and subsequent war), the Atari VCS, has undergone major changes in recent years, not only in shape but in the software too. Long gone are the days of the *Combat* cartridge with its *Tank* and *Jet* games. The machine's still very much alive and kicking (rather fiercely), with considerable software support (at console levels, at least). Programmers have learned the ins and outs of what is, after all, a decent console: a large colour palette to hand, a decent sound chip and now some decent games.

Palan Distribution Limited handle the Atari 2600 and around 60 games for it. Among the delightfully named games such as *Laserblast*, *Demon Attack* and *Megamania* there are coin-op conversions to be found, film conversions, home computer game conversions including *Commando*, *Zaxxon*, *Winter Games*, *California Games*, *Ghostbusters*, *H.E.R.O.*, *Pitfall* and more.

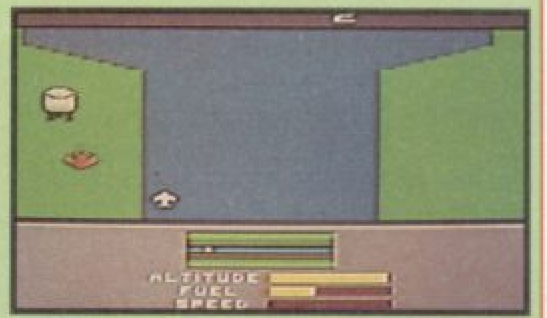
Palan Electronics Limited can be contacted at *Unit 14, Waltham Park Industrial Estate, Billet Road, London, E17 5DU* (Tel. 01-531-7171)

River Raid 2

The original *River Raid* devised by Carol Shaw became an instant classic when it was first released, despite its chronically primitive graphics. With a gradual difficulty level involving the River of No Return gradually narrowing and inherently simple gameplay, the sequel rides (or should that be flies?) on the back of the prequel. In *River Raid 2* the F-16 has been traded in for the very common F-14, complete with aircraft carrier to launch from (be careful not to fall off the edge of the deck on take off).

The River wends its way deep into enemy territory with a horrific amount of military hardware on either side to discourage the odd pleasure flight and F-14 attack plane from flying along it. Speedboats, hot air balloons and other non-aggression vehicles pop up from time to time, but don't stop using those cannon, torpedoes and missiles to wear down the enemy. The familiar bridges from Part One also make an appearance which, while proving solid enough to shrug off collisions by enemy F-14s, can be destroyed.

The F-14 is now capable of climbing and diving to avoid hazards, although the bridges are solid enough to stop anyone showing off by flying through the legs. Also



of note is the ability to land on the carrier and a mid-flight refuelling sequences to keep the plane airborne.

Vertical scrolling shoot-'em-ups are ten thousand a penny but the charm of River Raid outweighs what are still primitive graphics with an appalling lack of detail about them. Colour is used, which is more than could be said for the original, unfortunately the character blocks are still one-colour. The graphics haven't kept pace with progress, but in their own simple way they are perfectly adequate and serve their purpose well.

The gameplay redeems the simplicity of execution with more depth about it than the original (although even with height to worry about and a new landing sequence this doesn't say a lot for the game's complexity). It does have immediate appeal, and the ever-narrower River ensures a near-infinite challenge.

TGM rating 76%

F-14 Tomcat

Back in the air again with the Grumman F-14, this is among the first flight simulators for the console and a console rarity in general.

An F-14's presence is needed in the skies around the Gulf. A Middle East country is up in arms and its Air Force is out looking for trouble. This situation is clearly unacceptable and so the USA sends in a carrier with you, a Top Gun pilot at the ready.

The F-14 can take to the air to engage enemy jets at up to Mach 2.4 with a full HUD and a variety of air-to-air missiles —



and, of course, an on-board cannon. It's not over even when the MiGs are heading Gulf-ward, you've still to get back and land the jet, which means you'll find out very quickly why a Top Gun is supposed to be the best of the best.

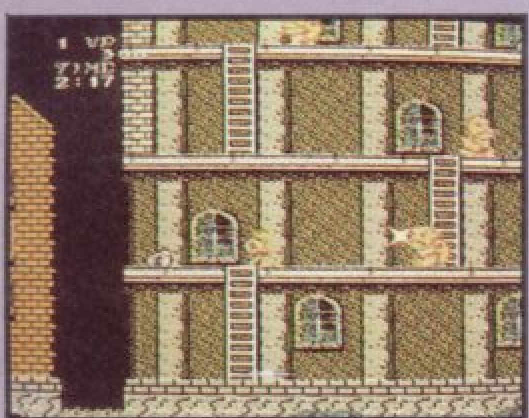
The most noticeable thing about *F-14* is the detail to be found within the game's

NINTENDO

'n'Goblins

pair of boxer shorts — one more hit in this state is enough for Arthur to die of shame.

Arthur's travels take him past the graveyard into even spookier forests, a rickety



fire bridge, a cavern complete with angry stalactites and onto the ice palace where a fire-breathing winged lizard (a dragon to you) is ready to toast pesky heroes.

'Playability comes first' seems to the be the motto with Nintendo games and *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* is no exception. The backgrounds are well-detailed and spooky enough to give you the creeps. The sprites lack significant detail but have a generally cute look to them (even the evil demons look rather pleasant).

The graphics are a compact and fairly accurate representation of the coin-op, each level gaining more and more detail, leading up to a fiery and wonderfully-powerful climax. The cute original sprites combined with atmospheric music mean this is a good conversion. One small gripe. Does the map screen have to appear and scroll along EVERY time you die?

TGM rating 84%

CLUB NINTENDO

Have you been feeling left out, let down and brushed off? No need any longer! Now Nintendo owners can revel in all things Nintendo through their own official *Club Nintendo* magazine.

Reviews, previews and hints 'n' tips can be experienced by sending off the application form found in all Nintendo gamepacks.

ATARI 2600

F-14 Tomcat

graphics, presentation and game structure as a whole. Colour isn't used in abundance but the primary objective seems to have been to create a realistic atmosphere with subtle colours. Sound is used effectively, with the whine of the engines, the thud of the cannon and simple but well implemented roar of a missile launch.

Detail is of paramount importance, from the start with the deck captain signalling the plane to start its engines through to the traumatic carrier landing, there's so much within F-14 Tomcat. Top marks for technical merit with this game — it really does push the console.

In unfair comparison with computer flight simulations, F-14 Tomcat looks decidedly average — it may not have quite the same depth, but for a console game it's a remarkable program. Try landing the F-14 after completing a mission, it ain't that easy!

TGM rating 82%

MENTIONING MENTION

Supplier of the PC Engine games for this issue, Mention Technical Services are going Japanese with a vengeance. Not only is the PC Engine at a bargain price of £159.95 (with PAL TV converter as well), they've also got over 50 Engine games. Titles include *P-47 Freedom Fighter, Darius, Galaga '88, Space Harrier 2, Wardner, Pac-Land, Afterburner, Thunder Blade* (the latter titles available soon) and even *Bubble Bobble 2*.

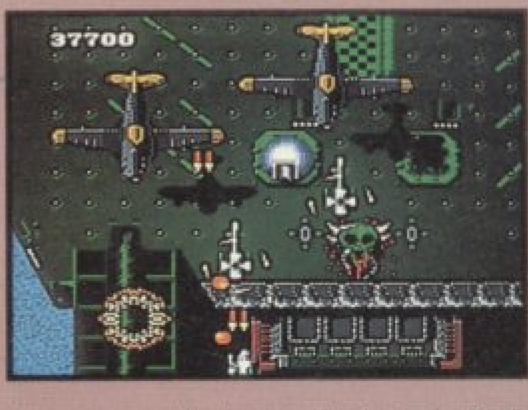
CD-ROM players and games will be available soon as well as the PC Engine joystick (£24.95). A VHS tape Bulletin 1000-style will also be available soon (£6.95)

Mention also stock a very large number of imported Nintendo games, a Nintendo joystick and a PAL TV converter/booster (£14.99) to run Japanese and American format titles. Titles include *Super Mario Brothers 1,2* AND *3, Bubble Bobble 2, Mah Jong 1-5, Contra* (*Gryzor* to us British) and many, many more. Also available will be Sega Mega Drives (£179.95) plus games such as *Mr Komatsu* and *Altered Beast* (£24.95) as well as *Phantasy Star 2,* and *SuperThunder Blade* (£24.95). *Out Run 3-D, Power Drift* and *Afterburner* are expected soon.

Mention Technical Services, 29 Malcolm Place, Helensburgh, G84 9HW. (0436) 78827. They promise to keep prices as low as possible, and with such machines as the Engine at 5p short of £160, Mention look set for a busy future.

PC ENGINE

Tiger



Now, on your PC Engine console, you too can be a scourge of the skies in *Tiger*, a conversion of a Taito combat helicopter coin-op.

Wending your way up vertically scrolling levels — the screen also scrolls left or right when needed to accommodate the full width of the playing area — chain guns are used to blast tanks, boats, planes, helicopters and gun emplacements which fire mercilessly at you throughout the game. Some leave icons behind when destroyed which give extra speed, an extra life, smart bombs, wider gunfire spread, or extra firepower.

The sprites are a mixed bag: 'copters are indistinct, larger planes are, well, plain(!), but tanks and gun emplacements are very arcade-like. Backgrounds aren't packed with detail, but some ground features are neatly drawn. Music and effects are what we've come to expect from the Engine: nothing special but fitting to the action.

Tiger is quite a difficult game, so it won't come easy to anyone but toughened players, but whatever your ability, it holds your interest. With each successive game a little more progress is made, ensuring you don't give up until it gets very difficult — and it certainly does!

TGM rating 86

P-47



Sounding more like a form to fill out than anything else, a P-47 is in fact a combat plane. A coin-op conversion sub-titled 'The Freedom Fighter', this is a game for Biggles fans everywhere, as you pilot the World War II fighter against German squadrons. The fighter flies rightward, the ground scrolling beneath it (or clouds behind it) while German planes attack. These are easily dealt with by machine-gun fire, but bombers, fittingly, are best tackled with bombs.

Icons picked up gain a continue-play option, extra speed, or missile, bomb, turret or explosion weaponry.

In basic terms, *P-47* is pretty unremarkable, as was the coin-op it originated from, but shoot-'em-ups are unique in that they are easy to get into and, even if only adequately done, are undeniably playable. The sprites are compact and detailed (except for the bland looking bombers) and move smoothly around the sky. Neat backgrounds complete the authentic coin-op look, using nice parallax scrolling — the clouds tinted orange by the sun in Level 2 are very attractive. Effects are flat but the tunes are jaunty and add to the fun.

TGM rating 68%

Deep Blue

Sub-aquatic antics await you in *Deep Blue*, a weird shoot-'em-up which puts you at the controls of a one-man submarine convincingly disguised as a bright semi-tropical fish. The camouflage is to allow easier infiltration into underwater tunnels and caves that are the source of a dangerous army of underwater creatures, mutated by dumped nuclear waste.

Fish, squid and sea snakes swim past and can be killed by the standard projectile weapon. A helpful cyan fish leaves behind a pod which restores a little health , increases speed, or give light bullet, swirl cutter or bubble beam weaponry.

The thin screen area gives an unusually



wide Cinemascope effect. Backgrounds use few colours and have no real detail, but their texture and colour scheme create a great atmosphere — particularly with the upward floating bubbles.

Music is amusingly nautical, sometimes in a soothing way, sometimes hectic, sometimes eerie. The garbled sound of the short-circuiting sub after it's hit is the highlight of an otherwise average set of sound effects.

Deep Blue isn't easy — the bobbing fish movement often makes them tricky to dodge or shoot while other creatures approach at a frightening speed and rate. Only one life is given, but at least the sub can take plenty of hits before sinking forever. There are only four levels, though each is very long, but it's the lack of variety that spoils the game.

TGM rating 58%



It is daybreak. You join the other pilots in the squadron crewroom to discuss objectives for the day ahead. Tactics, combat manoeuvres; all are captured completely by F-16 COMBAT PILOT. During your pre-flight briefing you instruct the ground crew on weapon loading and plan your attack...

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F-16 COMBAT PILOT



Atari ST screen.

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CAPCOM

A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

In August last year (TGM009), we ran a feature on Captive Communications — better known as Capcom — because it looked as though their coin-op conversions were worthy of attention. We were right. Previewed then as a forthcoming product, *Forgotten Worlds* has justified our faith. But it's only a start. Robin Hogg and Dominic Handy went to US Gold, the licensed UK base for Capcom, to have a look at two of the latest conversions which look like being world beaters

When you think of Capcom, you probably think *Commando*. For it was this product that shot the Japan-based company to 8-bit silicon stardom warry back in late 1985 — closely followed by the more-impressive version of their *Ghosts 'N' Goblins* in early 86. It was on these polished products that software house Elite grew and grew. In 1987, Elite's Capcom licence ran out, and in true Japanese spirit the arcade giants deigned to give fellow Birmingham-based software house, US Gold, their chance at popularising the 200-strong company with a ten-product licensing deal.



The headache for Tiertex, Graham Lilley and Softworx — 8-way scrolling in the two-year-old arcade hit Black Tiger

Captive Communications, founded by ex-'toy maker' Kenzo Tsujimoto in June 1983, have not only grown in size — expanding from small beginnings in Osaka, Japan, to offices in Tokyo and Hokkaido, and overseas to Sunnyvale, California, where their massive marketing operation is lead by Captain Commando — but also in stature. Capcom realise their US market is different: Tsujimoto accompanies a loyal band of designers to American trade shows every year to tap operators and find out their needs. As Bill Cravens, their US Sales Manager, says; Tsujimoto will walk into a store and buy £6,000 worth of books to bring the American culture to their development teams back in Japan.

The teams of 20 people contain planners, software programmers, character designers, hardware technicians and musicians. Capcom believe their independent development teams have become their trademark — pioneering unique visual and sound techniques reflected in their hit coin-ops. Capcom nurtures young professionals and further instills the independent drive by promoting from within the company.

Although Capcom are primarily known for their arcade muscle, they are tapping all corners of the entertainment industry. In true analogical Japanese style, they see their company as a tree from which much diversification makes it wide and fruitful, but without the strong development roots it would not be possible grow and expand. Capcom not only produce for other manufacturers — Taito, Sega, Namco, Nintendo among others — but also for the electronic toy market, TV games and, of course, the home computer market.

Capcom's current technical baby is their 'awesome' 'super chip'. From two-and-a-half years development they have compacted the power of ten normal arcade circuit boards into two microchips. Not only is this easier for your local arcade owner to swap games in cabinets, it also means that the games will become more and more powerful — with laser-quality graphics at a non-prohibitive price.

Not forgotten

Capcom have practically staked their company on the new super chips — costing £5.5 million to develop — but it seems to have paid off with their first super system release, *Forgotten Worlds* (touring the arcade circuit some eight months ago), out on home computer this month from US Gold. US Gold have already sold over a quarter of a million units from the five Capcom products they previously released, and hope *Forgotten Worlds* will substantially increase that figure.

Already the game is receiving glowing reviews from the TGM team (see page 30 in this issue), so what is behind all this success? Could it be the innovative storylines that have made Capcom renowned? *Forgotten Worlds* goes something like this...

Emperor Bios has unleashed



an octet of evil deities whose sole purpose is to wreak havoc on all forms of civilisation. The once-beautiful landscape has become barren, the homesteads where people once grazed their intergalactic llama have become forgotten worlds. However, the vengeful minds of the homeless have created two super warriors who are to gain revenge on the almighty horror. An awesome task awaits them: they must first pass three demi-gods; The Golden Dragon, The God of Destruction and The Paramecium. But don't be disheartened, for each wave of enemies destroyed deposits a small amount of money which can be saved up and spent in one of the numerous weapons shops that appear at regular intervals.

All computer versions allow simultaneous two-player action, creating a very addictive atmosphere. US Gold reckon this could follow *Bionic Commando* in becoming their top-selling Capcom release (topping *Bionic Commando*'s 70,000).

Striding on

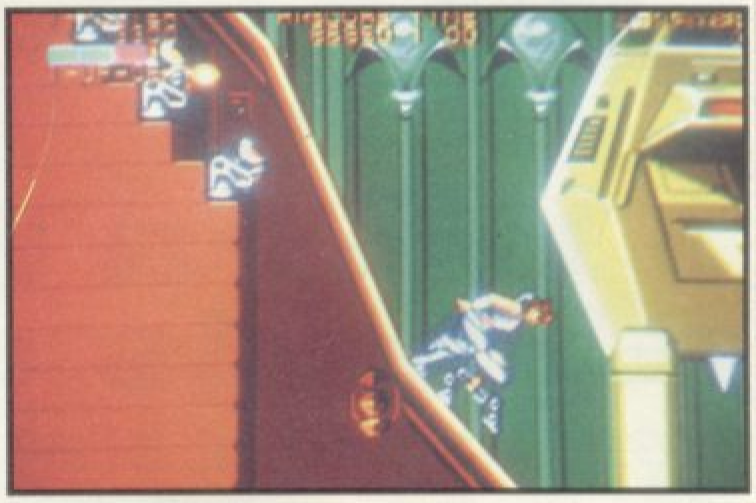
Following in August should be *Black Tiger*. The game was originally planned for last October, but due to various difficulties with the programming placement of the project it has still not appeared — despite first appearing in the arcades almost two years ago. US Gold are now avoiding most problems by placing the project with three different teams: Tiertex (Spectrum and Amstrad), Graham Lilley (ST and Amiga) and Softworx (C64). As with *Bionic Commando*, *Black Tiger* uses eight-way scrolling, as an armour-clad hero explores a multitude of platforms in a mystical world (shades of *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*?). As in *Forgotten Worlds*, three demonic dragons are causing complete mayhem, and it's up to you and your trusty sword to slay the salivating monsters before they partake in a meal of user and chips!

Talking of chips brings us to *Strider*, Capcom's second release utilising their revolutionary super chip. *Strider* is currently sweeping the floors in the arcades (something a lot of arcades need!), outselling all its competitors for the past three months. However, you'll have to wait till September for the computer version. Capcom obviously aren't taking part in the Gorbachov's Glasnost: *Strider* dumps you armed only with a sword in the middle of Russia with the mission to infiltrate the Red Army and foil their plans for global domination. Being a highly-trained secret agent, you are extremely mobile — triple backflips over oncoming KGB agents and monstrous robots are all part of the bargain. The visual capabilities and impressive sonic accompaniment are already making *Strider* **THE** platform and ladders game to be seen playing at the moment.

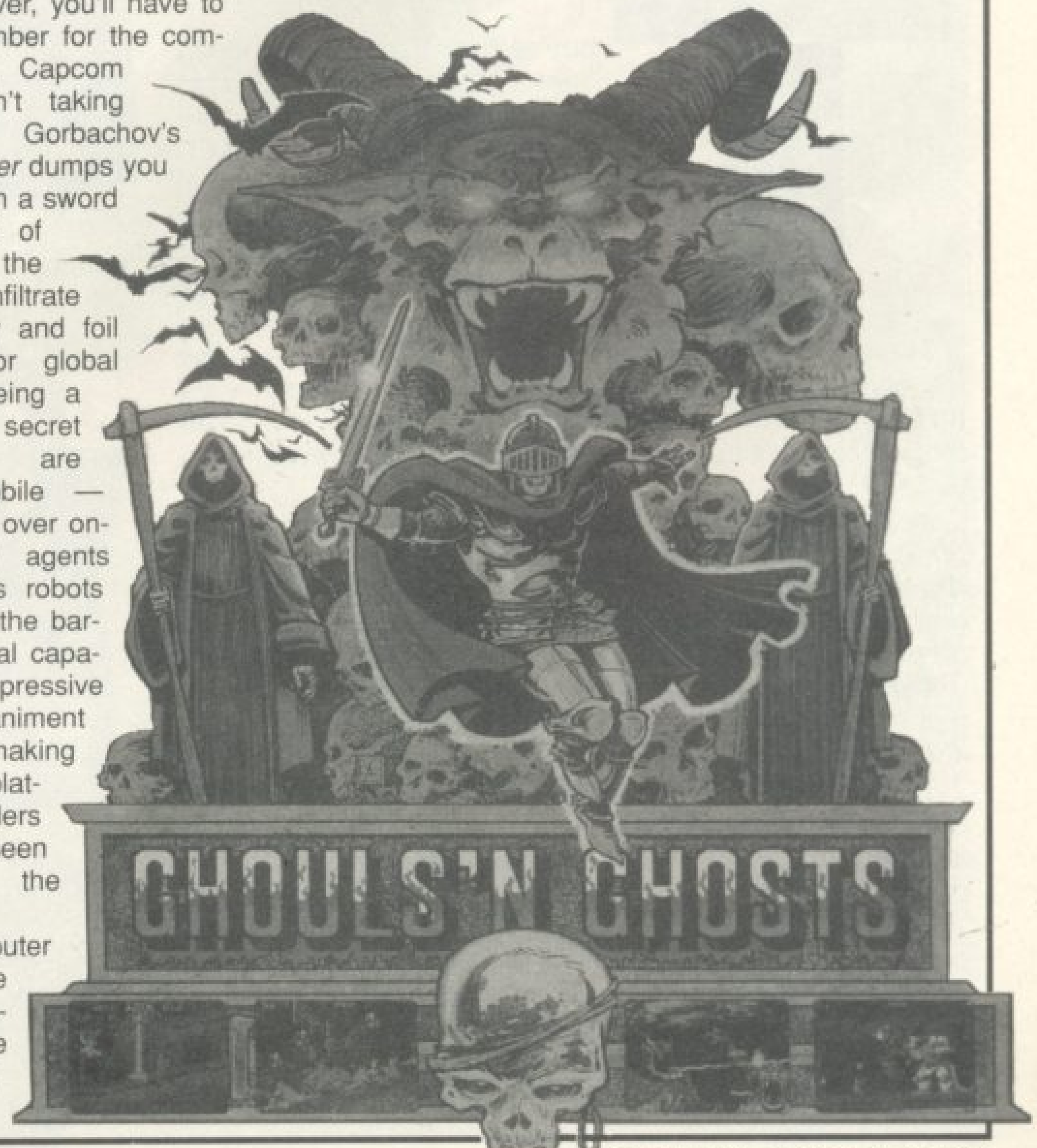
All the computer versions are being programmed from the folks that brought us *Thunder Blade*, Manchester-based Tiertex.

Finally comes *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* (previewed in TGM014), the long-awaited follow-up to *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*. Software Creations, programmers of massive hit *Bionic Commando*, have been chosen to convert the amazing arcade machine — let's hope the capabilities of the home computers can do the super chip-based arcade machine justice. As we said in Issue 14, 'the graphics have to be seen to be believed'.

Outselling all the arcade opposition, Strider, left and below, promises to be another huge Capcom hit on home computers, and who can wait for Ghouls 'N' Goblins (the arcade poster below)?



We also said: 'Capcom have got it made for 1989', and it's as true today as when we said it.



WE'RE TU… JAPANES…

● WIN a PC Engine & loads of games!

from Capcom, star purveyors of the Japanese arcade art

They're the Giants of the video game! Capcom, the people who brought you the amazing *Bionic Commandos* and *LED Storm*, and now *Forgotten Worlds*, have a busy year ahead of them, with a host of mega titles to be converted onto YOUR computer.

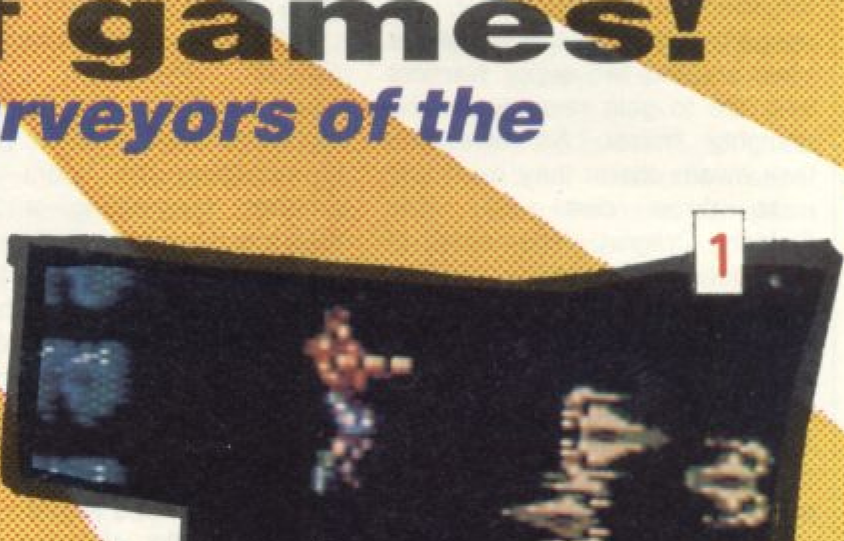
There's *Black Tiger*, which is out very soon, and the massive arcade hits *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* and *Strider*, lined up for the end of the year. And there's more on Capcom in this very issue's special feature, so turn there now and get genned up.

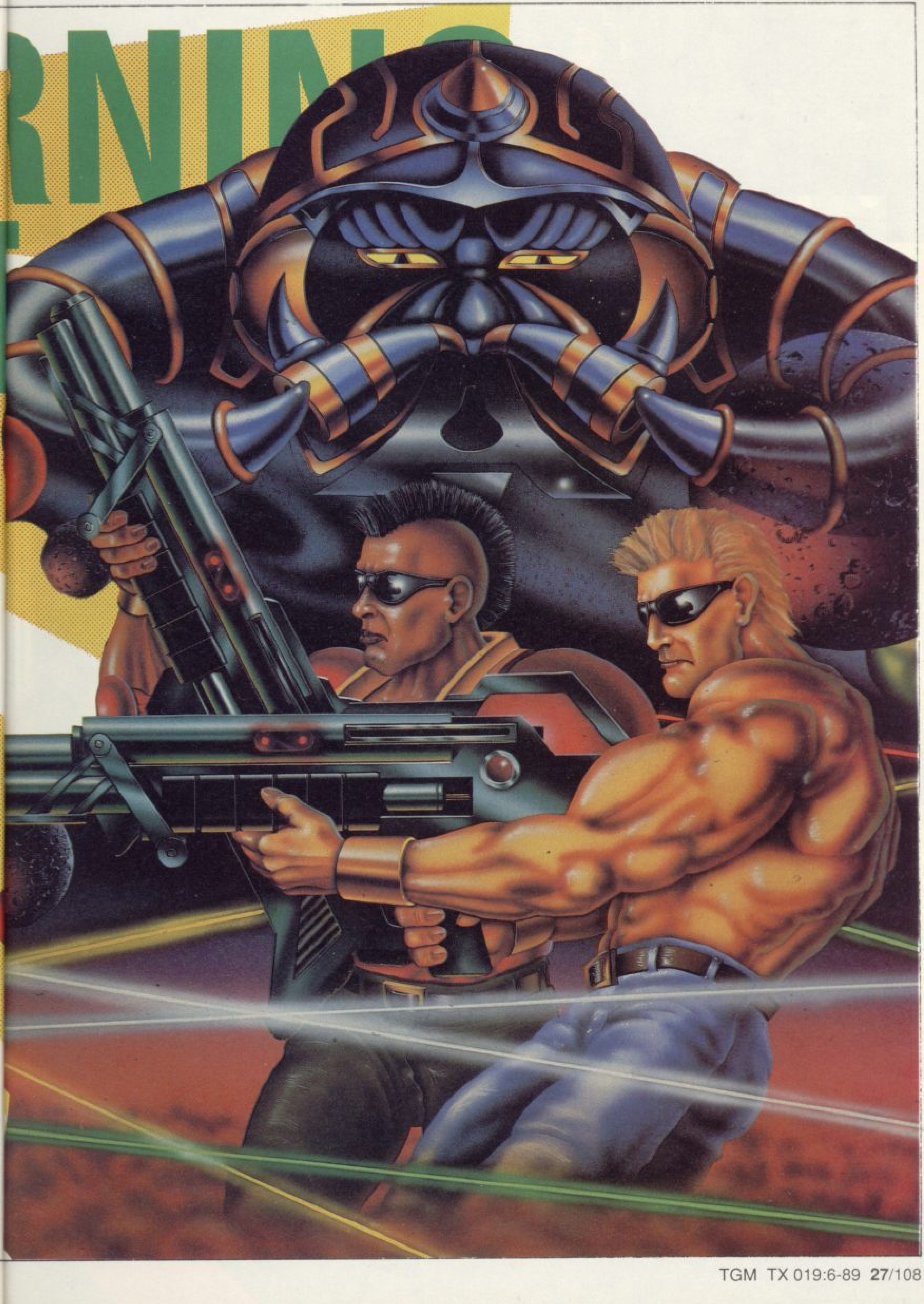
In generous Japanese style, Capcom are offering a great Japanese creation, the infamous PC Engine, as the **top prize**. The first-prize winner will also gets five fab games for the Engine – all tried and tested by the TGM crew (when we can extract them from their clammy paws).

Ten runners-up will receive FIVE Capcom computer games (the choice is yours, from any already released or imminent).

To be in with a chance of winning the PC Engine, brush up on your Capcom history notes and name the games featured in the FIVE segmented screen pictures on this page.

Send your entries, along with your choice of five Capcom games, to: **I'VE BEEN CAPTURED COMP, TGM, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*.** The normal competition rules, as detailed in the masthead, apply. Anyone found cheating will be sentenced to an appearance on the Japanese game show *Endurance*!

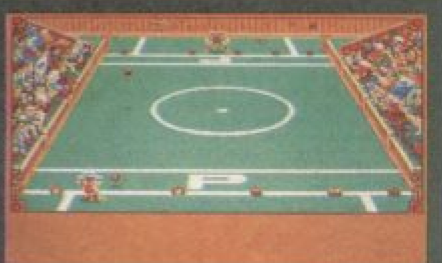



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GOLDEN GOBLINS®

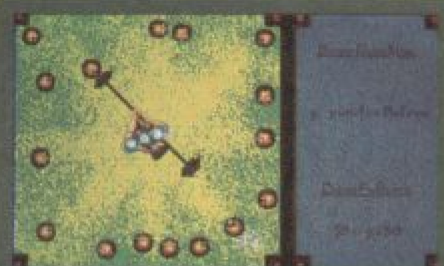
GRAND MONSTER SLAM

Amiga screen



Listen to the crowd roar as you enter the stadium and take up your position opposite your opponent.

PC (EGA) screen



Have you the skill to fight off the furious beloms with your punji-stick?

C 64 screen



These are some of your opponents. Knock them out and go from round-to-round to the super-league.

Atari ST screen



GRAND MONSTER SLAM: Can you become this years Grand Slammer?



Available for the C64, Atari ST, Amiga and PC

C64 cassette	£9.99
C64 disk	£12.99
Atari ST	£19.99
Amiga	£19.99
PC	£19.99

Rainbow Arts (U.K.), Sketty Close, Brackmills Business Park, Northampton NN4 0PL.

The Games machine

REVIEWS

30 ■ FORGOTTEN WORLDS

US Gold/Capcom's coin-op hit roars in, all conversions firing, and what a game it is! See the feature on page 24 and thrill to what follows!



TOP SCORE

STAR UPDATE

32 ■ KICK OFF

Anco strike gold with their football sim which boasts sophisticated new ball and player control

STAR PLAYER

49 ■ THE KRISTAL

Previewed for the first time anywhere in TGM, the mammoth epic is now here. A stage musical that never made it, *The Kristal*'s programmers have made no concessions in providing us with this star player.



46 ■ MILLENNIUM 2.2

'A true 16-bit game!' cry the reviewers of this Electric Dreams space fantasy with graphics to match Stanley Kubrick's vision of 2001.

43 ■ BLOOD MONEY

From Psygnosis — the software house with barely a hitch — a 16-bit shoot-'em-up to knock the socks off even the most hardened gamesplayer. This is the one to buy for its intro sequences alone!

36 ■ ARCHIPELAGOS

A cross between The Sentinel and Virus, Astral Software/Logotron's clever 16-bit, multi-world strategy and arcade game is weird and utterly compelling.



PRESS ANY KEY

Never make a destructive god angry

FORGOTTEN

Capcom

The Games machine TOP SCORE







'Sorry, luv, we're fresh out of extra-heavy lasers...': shopping for extra armaments. By computer from the top: Amiga, Commodore 64/128 and Spectrum salesgirls

Across all formats *Forgotten Worlds* comes across primarily as an ace shoot-'em-up (particularly excellent in two-player mode) polished to sparkling perfection by its superb graphics. The 16-bit versions, with all the flashy trimmings, have the advantage but even the humble Spectrum gives its all.

The Forgotten Worlds of the title are in a sorry state, mere playthings for a jealous god. Bios, emperor of all the worlds and the Almighty God of Destruction created eight lesser gods of pure evil, and together they wreaked terrible vengeance on the worlds. The carnage has reduced the worlds and their peoples to little more than far-distant memories.

But although Bios may have broken their backs, the inhabitants' spirit remains undiminished. Now the Forgotten Worlds try to fight back through a mind-melding which forms two psychic allies — super warriors destined to fight Bios to the death and defeat his guardians as they do so.

Even super warriors face some tough going when up against Bios's bodyguards — the Golden Dragon, The God of Destruction and the Paramecium, all vying for a firstclass conflict at the end of each level.

The two macho men of the future weave their warring route through horizontally and vertically scrolling levels, wasting all before them; business is good in this particularly violent neck of the woods. The action kicks off in the Paramecium level as the warriors jet-pack through the first of many ruined cities pitted against aliens, missiles and just about the lot, all rushing to aid their wrathful leader in eradicating all intruders.

The aliens are loaded — literally — not only with weaponry but cash as well. So



killing them is good for defence and profit as you pick up their dropped coins called Zennies. Collected cash can be put to good use, for despite all the destruction, amid the ruins a shop still stands where weapons, armour, lives and top-up energy can be bought.

Your adversaries become extremely unpleasant as your two warriors penetrate ever further into the enemy's defences. robotic spiders, killer cogs (!), gigantic leaping worms, stacked up garbage and other detritus prove more than a handful without the several thousand other aliens flying around.

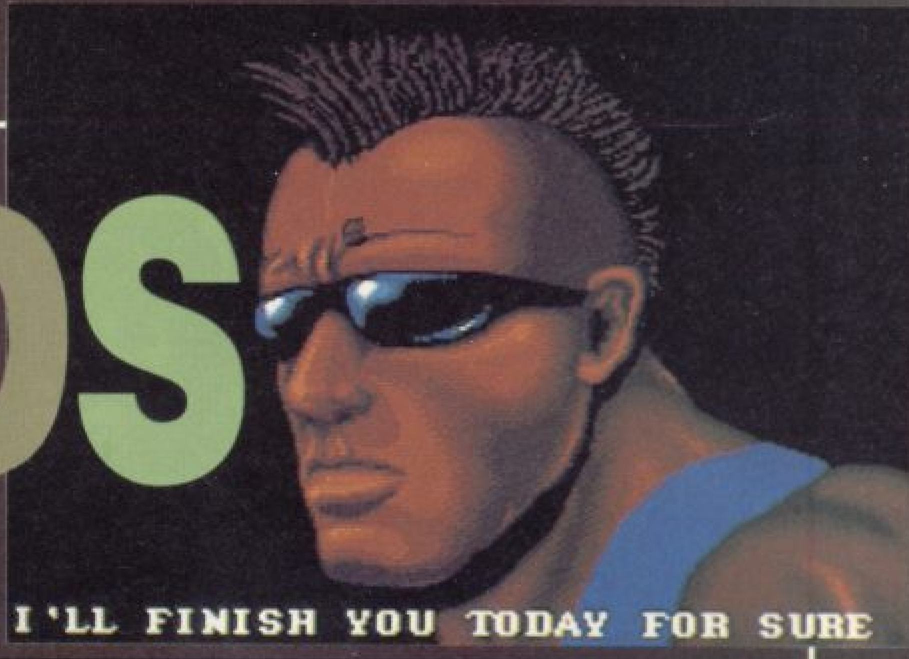
Beating the coin-slot

The thoughts in Arc Development's minds when they were given *Forgotten Worlds* to convert are no doubt unprintable. The first of Capcom's games to use the awesome new generation CP graphics chip, *Forgotten Worlds* sure takes some beating.

When the coin-op was first unleashed on an unsuspecting public, in time-honoured fashion the graphics overwhelmed the simple gameplay in much the same way *Afterburner* did.

But recently wonders seem to have been worked with regular occurrence in the coin-op conversion field and *Forgotten Worlds* is the latest to don the 'best conversion yet' mantle — better, in fact, than the original — and it looks to keep it for quite a while to come.

WORLDS







Centre: our super heroes encounter the gungy, slimy Paramecium, while above the dreaded dragon breathes fire and brimtone — Amiga screens

Talk of the destroyed town are the awesome behemoth opponents at levels' ends — from the Paramecium with its rotating garbage clawing at the good guys to the Dust Dragon breathing fire. And any who survive his minions must finally face the almighty Bios, God of Destruction, in all his death-dealing glory. Super warriors only need apply to save the Forgotten Worlds in one frantic battle for supremacy.

If *Forgotten Worlds* is anything to go by, the rest of the Capcom releases look set for unrivalled success — roll on Strider and the others!

AMSTRAD 90%

£9.99 cass
£14.99 disk

A smaller screen than the others, but the game itself is no less enjoyable. Colour is in plentiful supply and detail is all there in one faithful conversion. The lack of between-level title screens can't be helped, but Forgotten Worlds rises to the challenge of conversion brilliantly — a great shoot-'em-up with remarkably good graphics to match.

AMIGA 94%

£19.99

Don't question how they managed to squeeze nearly all the graphics, speech and digitised pictures of one awesome coin-op into one 512K machine, just play the game! Smooth as silk scrolling goes unnoticed when you're up to your armpits in aliens and bullets, all beautifully detailed, with colour galore making Forgotten Worlds a 16-bit unbeatable treat.

SPECTRUM 88%

£8.99 cass
£12.99 disk

The monochrome backgrounds are cleverly disguised by brightly coloured characters, and although colour clash can reduce the professional sparkle of the game from time to time, the quality parallax scrolling and some superbly detailed sprites just can't be ignored. A very fine Spectrum purchase.

OTHER FORMATS

A PC version is undergoing conversion at this very moment, and planned for August, it will be priced at £19.99.

C64/128 91%

£9.99 cass
£14.99 disk

Closely defined graphics always look good on the C64, and together with subtle colouring throughout, the characters are stunning. Sonically Forgotten Worlds achieves a high ranking with normally average effects turning out well, enhancing the already very strong atmosphere.

ATARI ST 92%

£19.99

Next to no difference in the graphics stakes with parallax scrolling working all the better on a machine not used to such a technique. Speech and music are competently executed and theres little that can be faulted in the presentation, atmosphere and accuracy of conversion. If you though Led Storm was good wait until you see Forgotten Worlds.

PRESS ANY KEY

A better style of soccer action

KICK OFF

Anco

Anco's contribution to a relatively unexploited area of 16-bit gaming, *Kick Off* follows from their ice-hockey simulation, *Face Off*.

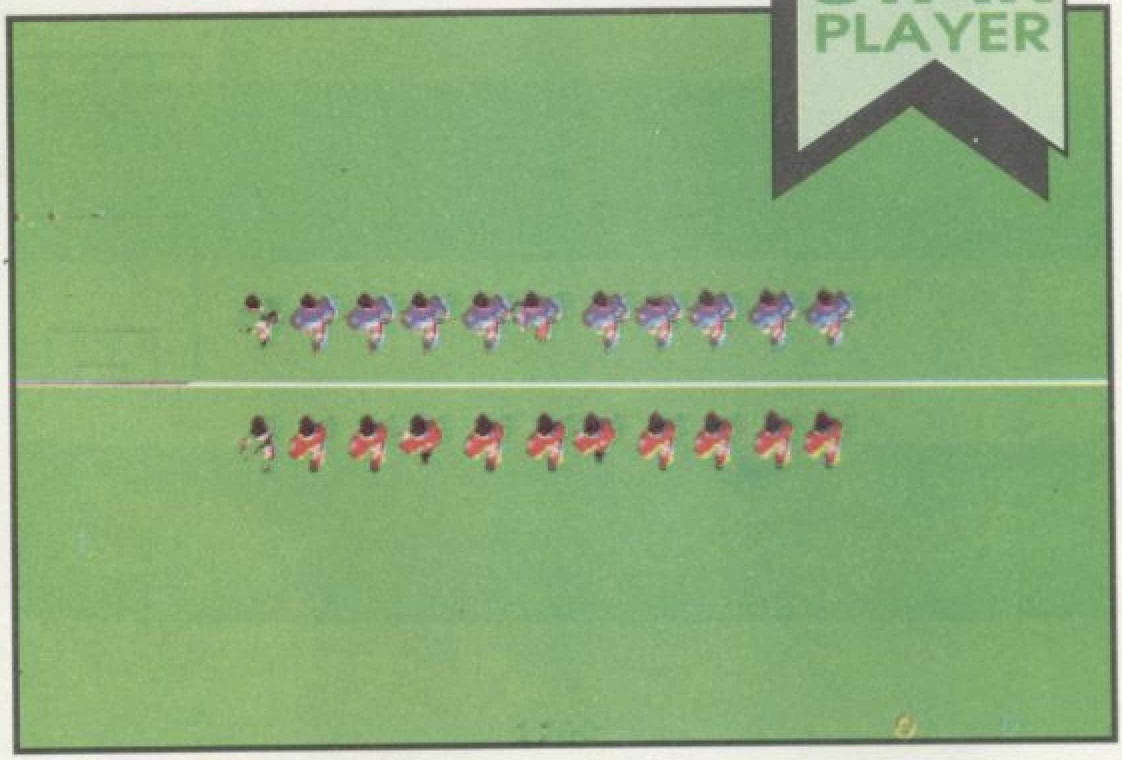
To its fans, and despite recent overshadowing from hooliganism and tragedy, football remains a fiendishly deceptive sport, simple in concept complex in skills requirement and tactics. Computer football games fall broadly into two categories, management sims and arcade-style action games. It's to the latter that Anco have turned their attention, and their attempt offers a variety of features including a new and highly realistic ball-control system.

Gone is the bizarre ability to keep the ball superglued to a player's toes, now it goes off in the direction last kicked and keeps on going. It's up to the player (of course) to direct it (hopefully) goalwards.

It's this reworking of traditional computer football ideas that dramatically pushes Kick Off's realism to far greater heights than has been achieved before. Now you've REALLY got to work to get the ball in the net!

All this is helped by the presence of a large number of moves including 8-way headers, ball chipping, dribbling and cannon shots literally flying half the length of the pitch. Four types of team formation and five skill levels provide game variety — the higher the team skill level the faster the team moves and the greater its accuracy. On International Level the speed of play is frighteningly fast — the independent skill levels mean an expert can be handicapped when playing against a novice so as to even things out.

Fouls, player injuries, red and yellow cards, corners, penalties, throw-ins — they're all there, the only major omission (other than action replays) is a referee. One of 15 types of ref with differing levels of leniency keeps the match under control (the leniency level otherwise known as the 'blindness' factor). Whistle-blowing, the booking of players, awarding of corners and the like is all done without the ref having to walk on.





The great thing about *Kick Off* is that at ALL times you're in total control of your players' actions. The 'new' control method takes time to grasp but once learnt, the game is as rewarding to play as MicroProse *Soccer*, if not more.

Like real life, goals are hard to come and both teams would have to work hard to gain them — uneven play is catered for with both sides having independently selected skill levels.

The speed of *Kick Off* is remarkable, beating all before it easily, and with the true concept of ball skills adding a wealth of realism to the game *Kick Off* the best 16-bit soccer simulator yet

As usual with football games, the graphics aren't much to write about and a still frame does no justice, but new moves and fancy footwork in Anco's *Kick Off* make this overhead football frenzy game the best 16-bit simulator we've seen so far



ATARI ST 87%

£19.95

Untidy in places with sprite flicker and basic in-game presentation, Kick Off is otherwise technically impressive with very fast-moving action coupled to full-screen scrolling. At ten pounds (which Anco would have liked, but some chainstores preferred a higher price) it would have been superb value for money, but it's still a great buy.

AMIGA 87%

£19.95

Much the same as the ST game but with the scoreline intruding into the pitch. Speed-wise Kick Off can't be beaten and is at times frighteningly fast moving — true football skills are needed in every sense of the word.

OTHER FORMATS

Amiga owners can have a game of computer footie for the same entrance fee of £19.95, out soon



16-bit burglar nostalgia

RAFFLES

The Edge

Renamed from its previous 8-bit release of *Inside Outing*, *Raffles* provides diversion for 16-bit kleptomaniacs. Dotty Lord Crutcher hid all his valuables before inconveniently popping his clogs (in the popular vernacular). Even Lady Crutcher couldn't find them, so she's lured you, a thief, into tracking them down for her.

In an isometric 3-D environment, you can pick up or pull virtually any object you find — glasses, chairs, plates and so on — in order to reach the grieving widow's diamonds. Your task is hindered by surprisingly dangerous canaries and mutant mice.

Knight Lore-style arcade adventures are rare 16-bit beasts, but *Raffles* will probably only interest those unfamiliar with the game format or ex-8-bit owners wanting a trip down memory lane. Competently programmed, it's largely unthrilling to play: burglary isn't as exciting as you'd expect.

Raunchy Raffles runs rampant 'round rectangular rooms rife with rapid rodents

ATARI ST 65%

£19.99

The upper-class burglar looks more like a Play School presenter: brightly dressed, lacking detail and with a swagger of militaristic precision. The giant mice are strange, too — they resemble rotund pigs. Still, the rooms and objects enjoy colour and detail, though the graphics aren't as polished as they could be, and one or two good sound effects and a sampled groan make up for an annoying tune.

Commodore 64 violence in favour

Speedball

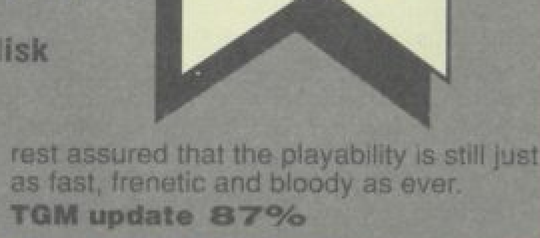
The Games Machine STAR UPDATE

Imageworks ■ £9.99 cass, £12.99 disk

Amiga 86% — TGM014

The Bitmap Brothers' violent future football game scored a big 16-bit hit, and this 8-bit version goes a long way to emulating its success. Gameplay and player options remain the same, although set at a slightly lower difficulty level. A metal dome slides up from the floor and fires the ball in a random direction. Players run over the ball to pick it up, and points are scored by throwing it into the opposition's goal mouth. Icons collected on their appearance can provide tackle protection, increased stamina, automatic possession and so on, or be saved to the end of the match and traded for such goodies as increased stamina, bribing an official or even the referee. The graphics may not kick the Amiga's into touch, but rest assured that the playability is still just as fast, frenetic and bloody as ever.

TGM update 87%



From 16- to 8-bit, the action's as hot

VERSION UPDATES

ATARI ST

Chicago '30s

US GOLD £19.99

Spectrum 42%, Amstrad 39% — TGM018

Elliot Ness is enforcing the law and the mob's out to do him in. Hardly making an 8-bit impact, the ST game follows the Amstrad version's line, with smoother but disappointingly similar graphics and tired gameplay. Workmanlike production, but a shallow concept.

TGM update 40%

ATARI ST ■ AMIGA

Battlehawks 1942

US GOLD £24.99

PC 75% — TGM018

Much of the graphic style of the PC version is evident within both 16-bit conversions and the new graphic technique works so much the better because of it. Digitised graphics of planes, though sparse in use, move realistcally, and the



illusion of diving, climbing and circling is what it's all about — and it works well. Overcompensation of plane movement easily results in the plane spinning wildly, a very sensitive plane it seems — it's a bit of a bugbear. As only moderate use is made of Amiga and ST graphics, potential is missed, especially on the former. But the tension associated with flying through a hail of flak against impossible odds is done justice by Lucasfilm's programmers on the perihperal screens.

TGM update: Atari ST 73%
Amiga 72%

MSX

Robocop

OCEAN £8.95 cass, £14.95 disk

Spectrum 81%, Commodore 64/128 77% — TGM015, Amstrad 78% — TGM017, Atari ST 90%, Amiga 90% — TGM018

It's no bad thing to see the same source code used for multiple versions, particularly if the game is as strong a title as *RoboCop*. The Spectrum version in appearance, *RoboCop* may not please die-hard MSX owners, but the absence of colours proves acceptable with speed needing to be kept up. Music is similarly faithful as a conversion of the Spectrum tune. With easily appealing and very satisfying gameplay, *RoboCop* is a powerful game and futuristic blasting at its best.

TGM update 81%

PRESS ANY KEY

Time to outrun the patrol cars again in...

THE DUEL – TEST DRIVE II

Accolade

Yeah, you dreamed of owning a Lamborghini, Testarossa or a Porsche 911 Turbo in the original *Test Drive*, but now Accolade have bettered themselves in offering you the chance to burn two of the fastest production cars in existence — the Ferrari F40 and Porsche 959!

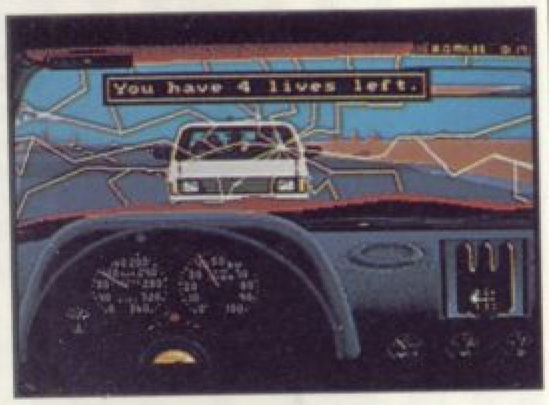
First choose which wheel of these dream machines to slide behind (in computer racing mode you also choose the opponent's vehicle). Then decide whether or not to race the computer, or try to beat the clock on some of the most tortuous roads ever designed by a sane man. Whichever mode is chosen, gear changing is one of the most important considerations in this game.

Next comes the skill level setting from the twelve available ranging from chicken-hearted wimp automatic transmission mode (nine-tenths of us at TGM) to the real macho pro who goes all the way and risks running the gauntlet (like Robin 'iron man' Hogg). *Test Drive II* has three different roadscapes to race along: the desert with its hot burning sand, a scary mountain route, (don't look over the side of the cliff) and a gentle Sunday afternoon doddle along a pleasant tree-lined country road.

The freeway isn't entirely free to tearaways, however, because the cars, vans and police cars have been transferred over from *Test Drive* to cause you aggro and annoyance. The cops are the biggest pains. They have two methods of catching loonies like you. First is to give chase, and it's your decision whether to pull over and get a ticket (not advisable), or out run the dude. Second, you occasionally see a cop standing at the side of the road, again pull over for the ticket or run for it.

At the end of each level you have to pull up at a gas station, but don't overshoot it because the walk back if you run out of fuel incurs a hefty penalty.

The Duel — Test Drive II doesn't add anything special to the racing game genre, but who really cares when it's this much fun?





Life in the fast lane

As in the original, score screens after a section inform on your time, average speed, score etc (and those of the computer player if applicable). Depending on your performance several caustic comments are hurled at you by the computer. Five lives are provided at the start, and if you whack a car or are penalised you lose one, though if you make it to the gas station a life is added. Life in the fast lane is tense, but it's great fun, just like *The Duel-Test Drive II*.

AMIGA 82%

Price: TBA

Test Drive **was let down with sparse graphics, vroomy engine noises and doubtful lastability. But with three scenarios (a data disk soon available) very impressive cars (also subject to a data disk), and heaps of gameplay, this initially frustrating racing game is one fans of** Test Drive **shouldn't be without.**

Poetry in motion

DARK SIDE

MicroStatus ■ Amiga, Atari ST (tba, probably £24.95)

Spectrum 93%, Amstrad 93% — TGM008, Commodore 64 90% —TGM009, PC 94% — TGM014

The first game to emerge from MicroStatus, part of the ever-expanding MicroProse empire, *Dark Side* is Incentive's chance at breaking the 16-bit market in the States, as well as over here, with MicroProse's marketing muscle.

Speed is noticeably up on the PC game and goes like the clappers in comparison with the 8-bits. Like the previous Freescape game *Driller*, *Dark Side* opts for colour shading, as opposed to the subtle shading of the 8-bit versions. A variety of colours is used extensively and, together with very smooth-flowing animation, the game looks and plays a lot better than the other versions. Comparisons between ST and Amiga are fruitless, with little more than boosted sound effects on the Amiga.

The good news is that the 3-D Freescape world has never looked better and is an ideal purchase for would-be arcade adventurers looking for a new angle on their puzzling. If you're fond of arcade adventures then give *Dark Side* a try, the 3-D environment gives the game a high sense of realism with a great atmosphere. The addition of music would have been nice, but here is without doubt Freescape at its fastest and best.

TGM update:
Amiga 87%
Atari ST 86%

Faster than 8--bit or PC versions,* Dark Side *goes like the clappers on the Amiga

The Games machine STAR UPDATE



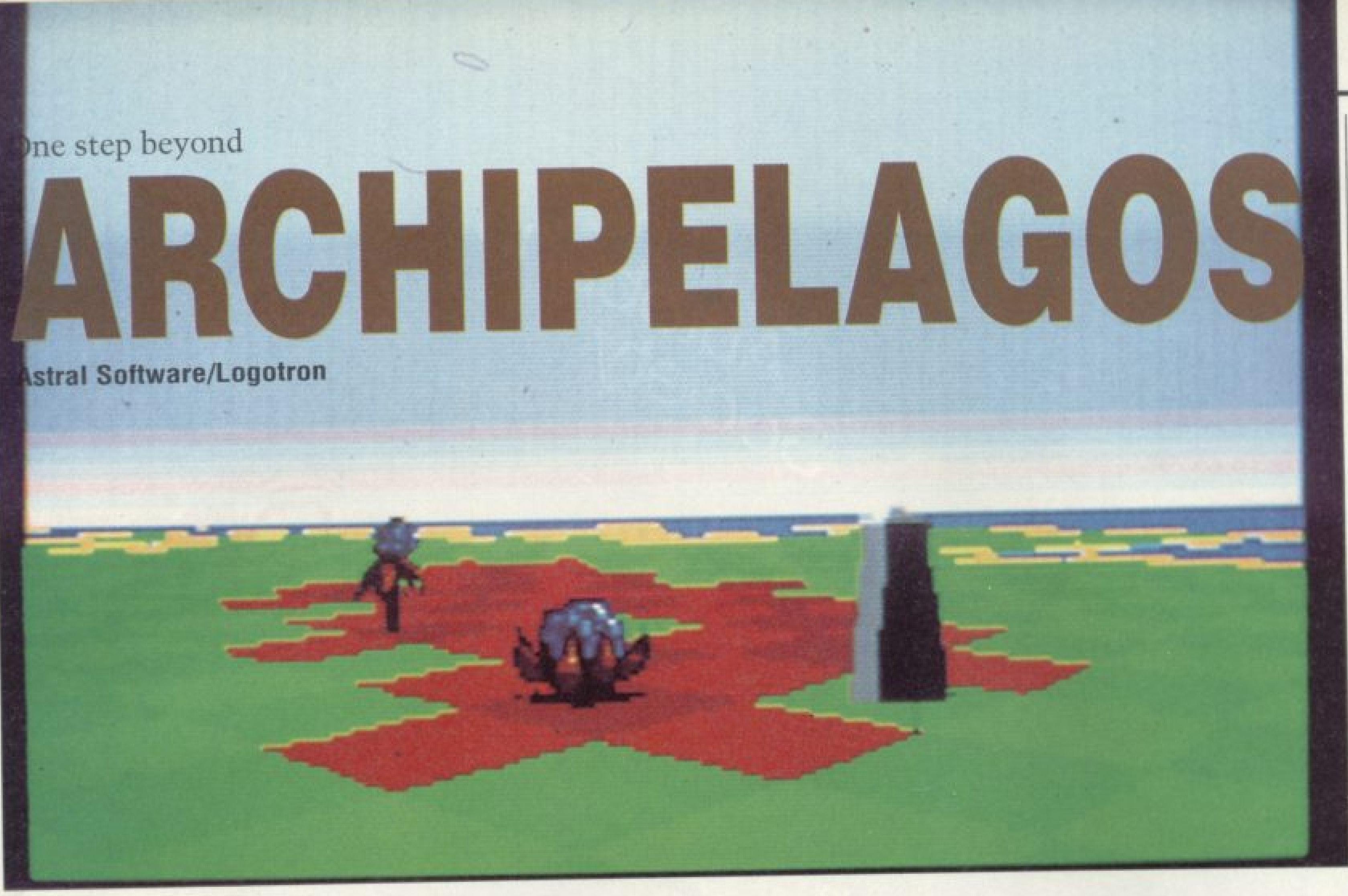


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Available on:
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One step beyond

ARCHIPELAGOS

Astral Software/Logotron



If you thought Triffids were pretty nasty, you're in for a real shock when you play this arcade strategy game. The animated plants called Arboareal trees grow and descend creepily, sending out a deadly virus towards you...

So is described *Archipelagos*, a cross-combination of *The Sentinel* and *Virus* but far more surreal. The land beyond our dreams is made up of many islands where life is not in a form as we know it. Floating in mid-air you take on the physical form of the explorer of the 9999 islands.

In the world of *Archipelagos* the obelisk reigns supreme. Like the Sentinel of eons past, the obelisk is the focal point for all the energy of the land and at all times the ultimate foe. The obelisk feeds off the very land itself and is kept alive through stones scattered around the metaphysical land.

To defeat the ruling leviathan all the stones around the isle must first be absorbed — a la *The Sentinel*. This is easier said than done when situated on lower levels but with the advent of the higher levels stones on separate islands need to be connected up to form a 'chain'.

Once all stones are destroyed a timer ticks down and the obelisk is now vulnerable — just move to the black monument and absorb it to complete the level before time runs out (otherwise the obelisk kills you).

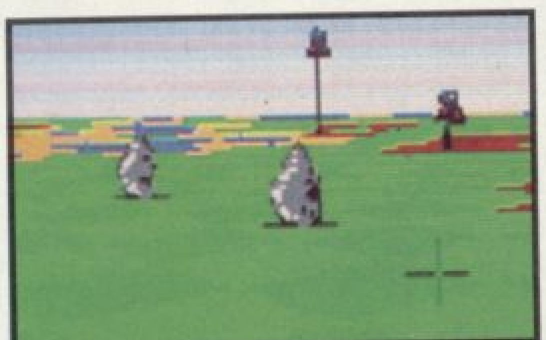
The trees around the island are deadly, as they rise and fall they literally advance towards you step by step. The virus they spread is lethal to walk over, so too are the trees if they catch you. Keeping on the move is the key to survival, that and the speed needed to absorb stones before the trees spread their virus everywhere.

The islands are viewed in the familiar 3-D form with a cursor used to point to objects around the world and either move to them or destroy them. Movement around the land is for much of the time an unhindered process, water forms a barrier between islands, which can be bridged by creating land — creating land costs energy, but to replenish lost energy island flowers can be collected.

This is an easy enough concept to grasp but with the many new levels come island-eating creatures, the Necromancer and Blood Eggs spewing forth the deadly virus in a lethal fountain. The Lost Souls of past explorers also wander aimlessly around the island.

The landscape gradually becomes more convoluted as the explorer moves onto new areas, with isles needing to be reached by creating causeways. With limited energy and time, things can get very tight later on. Success on the first few levels may be easy but death on the later levels is easier still.

With every fifth level (for the first hundred levels only) the landscape changes to a more familiar island shape (look out for the EastEnders map, the pig and the Wheel early on). Like *The Sentinel*, the weird nature of the game fuels the strange appeal and enhances an already surreal atmosphere, from this stems the game's weird but compelling appeal. Things start off easy with no more than slow-moving trees to avoid but the later levels are where the challenge lies, making *The Sentinel* look simple in comparison.



Mapping humour: quite a few of the archipelagos can look familiar

Archipelagos is a compulsive game containing some highly-compelling and very abstract elements. One to grow into.

AMIGA 90%

£24.95

Slightly faster movement is unnecessary with this type of game but appreciated nonetheless. Graphically no change but with an atmosphere this good it doesn't need heavily blitter-orientated, masterpiece graphics. Play this game in a dark room and become totally immersed in the world of Archipelagos, a game which makes The Sentinel **look like a non-starter.**

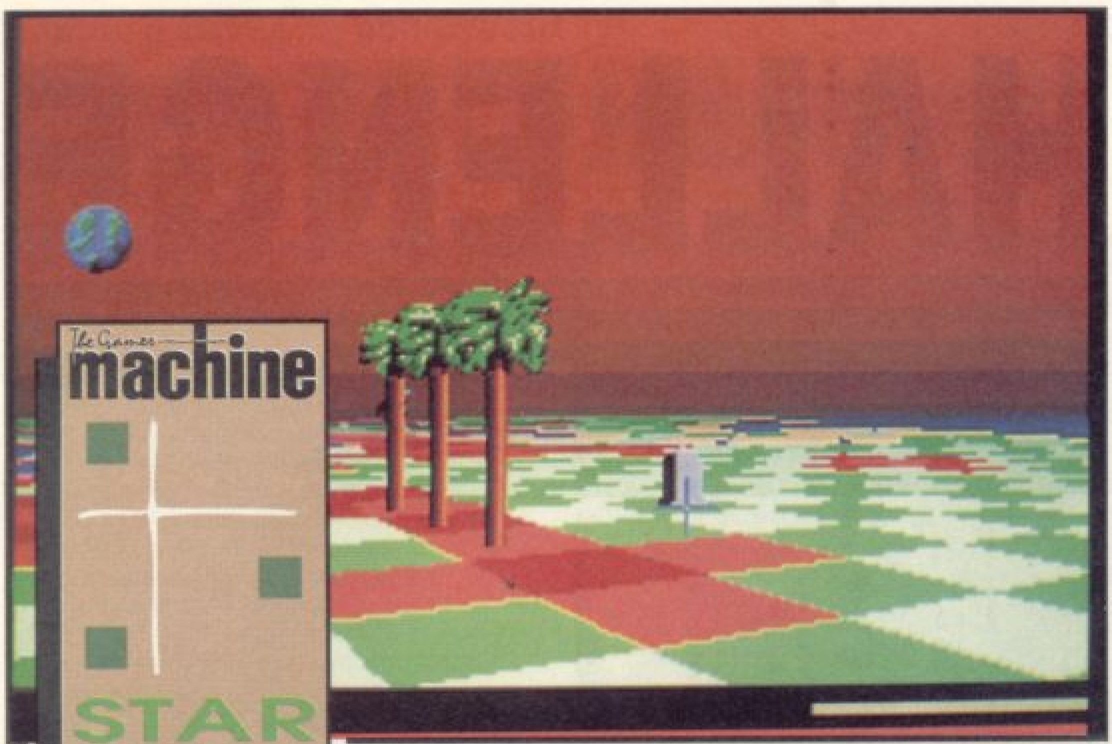
ATARI ST 90%

£24.95

The animation of movement around the isles may not be as smooth as Dark Side **but you don't need to be fast on your feet to play** Archipelagos**, just plan where you go carefully! The barren landscape weaves an odd spell in its creation of atmosphere, elements of isolation and fear quickly emerge as the enemy draws near with you always in their sights.**

OTHER FORMATS

A PC version is nearing completion. Watch out for an Update soon.



The Games Machine

STAR PLAYER

The eerily effective graphics are very similar in both versions (Amiga above, Atari ST shots below and under the title)





VERSION UPDATES

PC

Echelon

US GOLD £19.95
Commodore 64 71% — TGM007

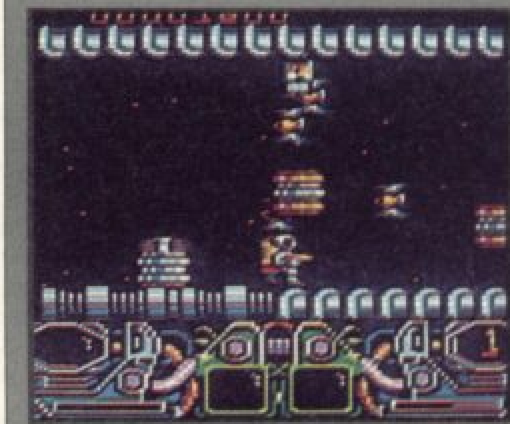
Echelon is an anti-piracy organisation set up by the International Space Federation. You start seated in a C-104 Tomahawk equipped with the latest computerised equipment specially built to destroy the scumbags. This is done by locating the pirate base and deactivating its cloaking device. Information on how to do this is scarce so objects scattered around the playing area must be teleported aboard in the hope they contain clues. *Echelon* is a longwinded which could send blasting fanatics to sleep over the 70-page operations manual. But matchsticks under the eyelids improves the situation a little, as does practice.

TGM Update 61%

COMMODORE 64/128 ■ AMSTRAD CPC

Dark Fusion

GREMLIN GRAPHICS £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Spectrum 78% — TGM017



No surprises for the remaining 8-bit versions of *Dark Fusion* (Amstrad CPC version pictured above), with its mixture of several games. Playability is high, although as with the Spectrum version, the difficulty level has been set on the high side too, and it takes many games to destroy the alien swarms on even the first level. Colourful, blasting fun with a canny choice of inspiration for the combined game elements used.

TGM update: CPC 74%
Commodore 64/128 72%

PC

Sinbad and the Throne of the Falcon

CINEMAWARE/MIRRORSOFT £29.99
Atari 520 ST 35%, 1040 ST 78%, C64 81% - TGM 012

A right pain to play on the Atari 520 ST — juggling disks every two seconds became commonplace, it's better news for PC owners with only two disks which don't have to be swapped too often. Two slight niggles though: the key functions are a little sluggish (especially on the shipwreck sub-game), and Cinemaware don't appear to know the difference between a centaur and a minotaur. Oh well.

TGM Update 65%

PRESS ANY KEY

A case of the genes being too tight

BIO CHALLENGE

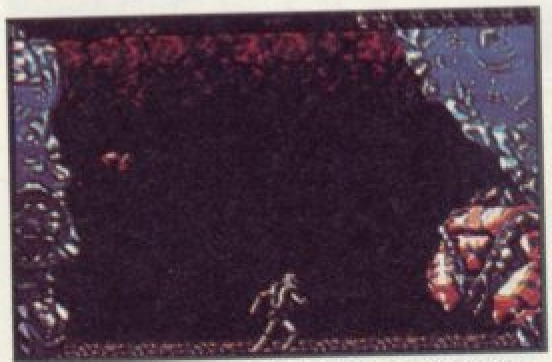
Palace/Delphine

The principles of evolution and civilisation state that the human mind and body increases in sophistication and efficiency as the centuries go by. Producers Delphine Software have more alarming ideas about mankind's future. Successive generations will have weaker genes, composing an ever-more puny physical being, so that eventually man will be too feeble a creature to exist.

A solution may be found by scientists, but at the time this game is set, biologists and physiologists have failed to stop the downward spiral. However, the human race still lives. A method of interfacing a brain with a robot has been developed so that people may live in metal bodies. But the mind-to-mechanism device has not been fully tested.

The player *of Bio Challenge* is a KLIPT — the latest and most complex of androids, now under guidance from a human brain. The test task is divided into six levels, each divided into between one and six worlds. The basic aim for each is to collect four pieces of an amulet within a time limit, using floating teleport devices to jump from world to world. The job is complicated by small drone craft which fly past in groups, but these are easily destroyed with the KLIPT's rapid spin move. Making contact with these, or any enemy, though, causes a loss in the KLIPT's life fluid — oil.

Much more difficult to eliminate but vital to progress are Guardian's Creatures. These traverse the ground of the scrolling worlds, below Charge Slabs (platforms). The Slabs can have one, two, three or infinite charges on them. A charge is used up by jumping onto the Slab then somersaulting on it, or by jumping upwards to hit its edge, which also has the effect of knocking the Slab sideways. When a Slab has no charge, it falls to the ground, hopefully to hit and destroy a Creature.



Off at a strong KLIPT for a breath of fresh air — unusual graphics from the ST game (both screens)

Atomised creatures always leave behind an object: a piece of amulet or their energy tanks. The energy capsules are needed for the end of the level, but as only four energy capsules can be carried at once they can be stored in a large sphere at the beginning of the level.

Creatures sometimes cause the summoning of a cauldron. These appear at set positions along a level, and give bonuses according to their colour (see box).

Once all four pieces of amulet have been collected, it's a run, jump and a spin to the large sphere where the deposited energy is collected. This is needed to tackle the Guardian (aka the 'big end-of-level nasty'), who lurks underground. Here the KLIPT can transform into a flying cannon and use the previously gathered energy capsules to fire bullets at the monster.

It's strange that the only blasting in the game is at this point — the scenario and landscape style is one that most programmers would use for a gun-toting android shoot-'em-up, or perhaps a progressive beat-'em-up. The rapid spin method of despatching the bad guys is unusual, and when combined with the use of Energy Slabs, makes for intriguing gameplay. Being able to move Slabs (and often having to) requires thought and some skill and strategy, particularly as the Guardian's Creatures change movement patterns from level to level.

Bio Challenge's gameplay is a breath of fresh air, both original and fun; 16-bit owners longing for a change can find it here.

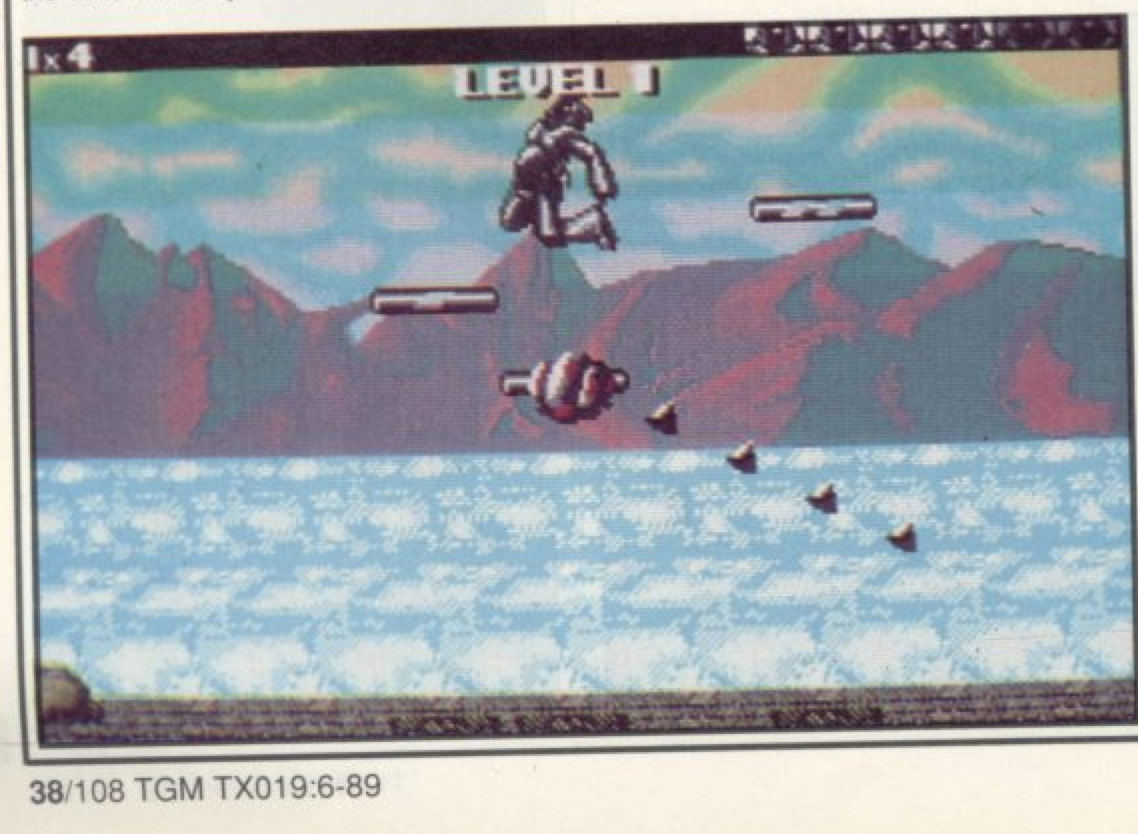
AMIGA 77%

£24.99

Graphics are similar to the ST's, but appear to be expand sideways a little, and definition, perhaps partly because of this, is scruffier. Music is very good, though, with unusual samples composed within a lively and futuristic melody.

THE CAULDRONS

Yellow cauldron: extra time (one minute)
Brown cauldron: 5000 bonus points
Green cauldron: green armour — smart bomb effect
Blue cauldron: extra life
Grey cauldron: expands oil tank to 32 units
Red cauldron: red armour — increased spin speed.



ATARI ST 77%

£19.99

Neat introductory sequences show a metallic shell spread over a fallen human and a speaking face transform, Tron-like, into a robot's featureless mask. In the game, the KLIPT is compactly designed and very well animated. It's odd that the robot's movement reminds us of Typhoon Thompson, **because the sound effects are very similar in style to that highly playable release, although the music is an improvement. Scrolling is smooth and backgrounds lack great detail but are nevertheless atmospheric.**

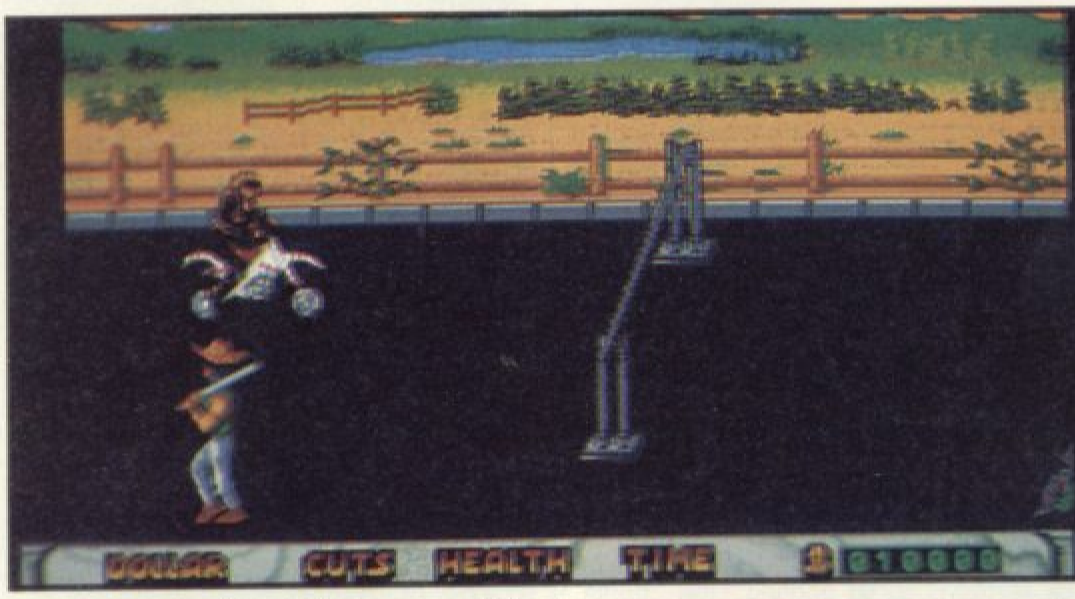
OTHER FORMATS

It is unlikely that any other versions of Bio Challenge **will be produced.**

Cunning stunts for another fall guy

DANGER FREAK

US Gold



You remember Colt Seavers... The Fall Guy, Lee Majors in his trendy leather jacket biffing the bad guys and performing all those seemingly impossible stunts. Perhaps you also remember Elite converting him into an old 8-bit game. No? In which case you might find this Rainbow Arts/US Gold release refreshingly original.

The aim of the game is to complete three levels and emerge at the end in one piece (if you don't do this the movie director will send your earnings to your next of kin).

Level 1 sees you astride a large and powerful motorbike. Three factors are against you as you scream off down the road, an energy level slowly depletes when you hit objects or stray from the road's centre. An inevitable timer ticks down the seconds left to complete the level, and finally each time a particular stunt fails the director calls a 'cut!'. These obviously cost money so an allowance of eight are made, and on the eighth such offence you're deep-sixed (removed).

Next it's into a sports car driven by a beautiful young lady — but no rest, listen to the sound of rotor blades... Yes that's the idea — climb onto the car's roof and grab hold of the rope ladder before the car crashes into that brick wall that's looming up (don't worry about the girl, she's a stunt person too).

In the second section, on a jet bike, you to skim across the waves, but logs, buoys, and the occasional nasty *Jaws*-type shark can thwart your chances of fame and fortune.

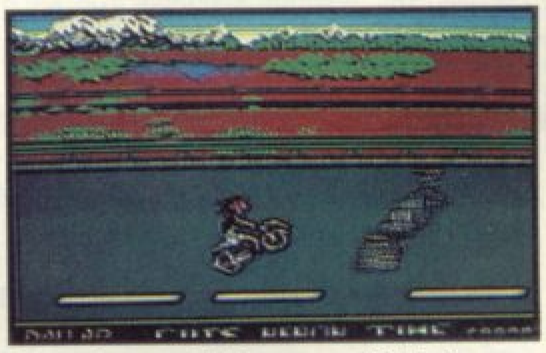
The final level takes place in the clouds where, under a nifty Biggles flying helmet you have to pop balloons (we haven't yet worked out why), avoid low-flying eagles and fire-breathing dragons.

The idea behind *Danger Freak* is neat, but in practice the combination of tough opponents, annoyingly-placed objects and tricky vehicle control conspires to keep you on the first screen indefinitely. Once the first level has been completed a frustratingly playable game emerges, the only question is how long will *Danger Freak* hold your attention.

AMIGA 68%

Price TBA

Despite the obvious graphic and sonic differences, playability is similar to the C64's. Rainbow Arts have come up with some good games, Denaris **(reviewed TGM 017) for example, and luckily they haven't damaged their reputation too much with** Danger Freak. **But still, try before you buy.**



Stunting astride your C64 bike

C64/128 65%

£9.99 cass £14.99 disk

The small blocky looking sprites on first sighting don't bode well for this game and tricky controls also give you a vaguely unsettled feeling. But it must be said that after a while Danger Freak **does tend grow on you, so short-term playability is assured.**

OTHER FORMATS

Work on PC and Atari ST versions are under way, more news when we receive it.

VERSION UPDATES

AMIGA ■ ATARI ST ■ AMSTRAD CPC

Pac-Land

GRANDSLAM 16-bit £19.95, CPC £8.95 cass, £14.95 disk

C64 85% — TGM006

The world's most successful video game character may well frown at Mr Micro's conversions for this, his second official 16-bit outing. The ST's suspect scrolling has been transferred intact to the Amiga, which won't go down well in the Amiga camp and should have been rectified to start with on the ST. It doesn't spoil gameplay, but it doesn't help the game's appearance. Both 16-bit versions look remarkably similar, with neither machine given the chance to show off. Pac bounces along with a little less vigour than the arcade character and colours are generally subdued in their usage, but at least most of the humour is still present.



Amstrad Pac: bouncy but scroll-less in Pac-Land

Like its Z80 counterpart, the Amstrad game has a nonsensical lack of scrolling, but with colour at least it looks very much alive. Not so bad in conversion, things could have looked so much better with successful scrolling.

TGM update: Amiga 51%
Atari ST 53%
Amstrad CPC 65%

COMMODORE 64/128

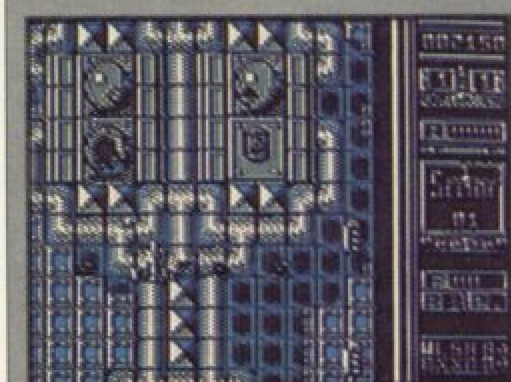
Xenon

MELBOURNE HOUSE £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk

Atari ST 85%, Amiga 89% — TGM005, Spectrum 82% — TGM017

One of the first Amiga board/coin-slot games, *Xenon* was something of a novelty in its 16-bit format, and the 8-bit conversions have managed to match their looks quite well. The Commodore version fares better on colour, of course, than the Spectrum. As with the other versions, the aliens are a tough bunch to destroy, leaving you on the first couple of screens for a while, but none of the 16-bit playability has been lost.

TGM Update 82%



PRESS ANY KEY

Can American TV shows get any worse...?

THE RUNNING MAN

Grandslam

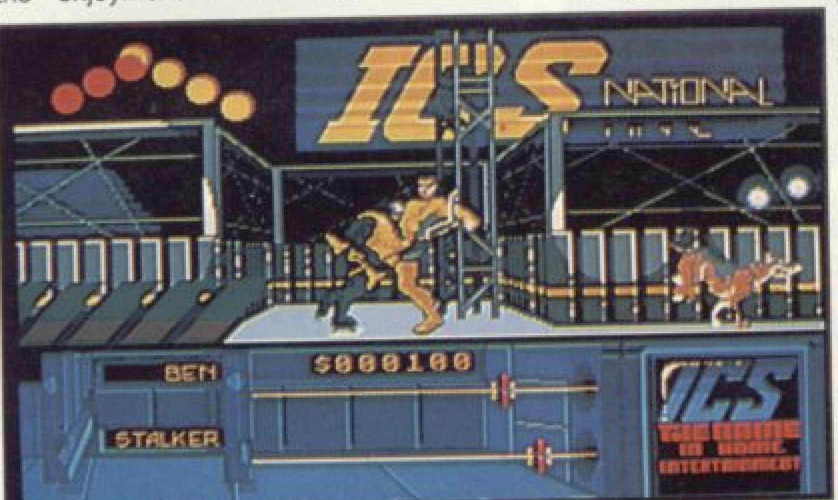
The year is 2019, Ben Richards is a young police officer on crowd control duty in downtown Bakersfield. But when the order comes through for all units to open fire on a group of unarmed protestors, Ben refuses to cooperate and is arrested himself.

Faced with the choice of spending a long time in prison or appear prime time TV's *The Running Man* — a favourite show where innocent people are dubbed criminals and hunted by bloodthirsty hitmen for the enjoyment of the crowds — Ben chooses the latter.

He's dubbed 'The Butcher Of Bakersfield' and thrown right into the centre of the proceedings as the grinning front man says IT'S SHOWTIME.

In *The Running Man*'s five levels the audience want blood (the contestants' if possible) and so plenty of aggro faces Ben as he fights his way to Killian the TV station's ruthless boss. The action takes place over a horizontally scrolling parallax screen filled with platforms, heart-stopping chasms, dogs which have to be kicked (and make a whimpering sound when you do), and of course the stalkers — the mean mothers who enjoy nothing more than bringing a little pain and misery into the unfortunate victim's life.

As Ben is bashed, battered and generally knocked around his energy level drops, but weapons can be picked up along the way to return some of the tender loving care, and some energy's restored by booting the mutts, although it's better to wait until a level's end where full strength is regained if you successfully complete a puzzle sub-game.



Two circles appear on screen, each with eight smaller circles set in them, rather like a telephone dial. Icons sit in these smaller circles and the idea is to match the left-hand dial icons with those on the right. A minute is given sixty to complete the puzzle, with ten seconds subtracted on each successive level.

The Running Man boasts great music and a brilliant digitised animated start sequence, but the gameplay sags. Largely to blame is the control of the beefy character (Schwarzenegger? Doesn't look much like him...), which is terrible. Much of the time is spent vainly waggling the stick trying to gain the movement you require.



The screaming TV audience (above) wait for the action to begin — which it does (below)

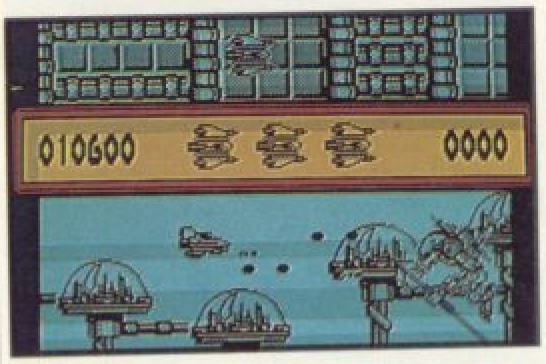
AMIGA 53%

£24.95

The old saying (paraphrased), pretty graphics do not necessarily a great game maketh certainly applies here. The makings of a good game are there, but they have been spoiled by frustrating gameplay and poor control.

OTHER FORMATS

Spectrum (£8.95 cass, £12.95 disk), Amstrad CPC and Commodore 64/128 (both £9.95 cass, £14.95 disk), Atari ST and PC (£24.95) versions are to follow rapidly. If the control problems experienced on the Amiga version are improved, it's likely The Running Man **will turn out a better 8-bit game.**



Boogie again to an old fave from another universe

SANXION — THE SPECTRUM REMIX

Thalamus

Branching out from their Commodore 64 roots, Thalamus have converted their first ever game — an original creation by Stavros Fasoulas. Aliens growing concerned over the technological advances of the human race dabbled with the 'Star Wars' SDI programme in an attempt to start World War III. A careless pilot crashing near the North Pole let slip the plot and gave rise to Operation Sanxion.

Travelling rightward in a laser-equiped ship through scrolling levels, a plan view of the action acts as a simple radar system, giving a little advanced warning of approaching attack waves. Occasionally a 'P' icon can be picked up to gain increased armament — very useful for the end-of-level bombardment of alien craft. This is very useful at any time in the game, in fact, as this is the 'Pretty Bloody Difficult' remix, in our opinion! The C64 original was a tricky shoot-'em-up, but in the Spectrum version resilient aliens speed relentlessly toward your flying pea-shooter and fire with frightening accuracy. And once screen space has been taken up by the radar and status panel, there isn't much room to manoeuvre — lives drop like flies.

A quality shoot-'em-up, but one for the toughened gamesplayer, the very patient or for masochists.

The Commodore 64 version of Sanxion **is now on Hewson's Rack-It label, priced £2.99.**

SPECTRUM 75%

£8.99 cass
£12.99 disk

In the redesign, the Sanxion ship lost its rocking motion, but otherwise the graphics are a competent monochrome translation of their detailed C64 selves. Scrolling is smooth and the 128K music is a fair rendition of Hubbard's acclaimed piece.



THE
COMPILATION
OF
EXCELLENCE
PRECIOUS METAL
CAPTAIN BLOOD "...the most stylishly evocative game the ST has yet seen". "Evocative graphics coupled with music by Jean-Michel Jarre have helped make Captain Blood the most eagerly awaited French 16-bit computer game ever" – Games Machine
ARKANOID II "The screens are well designed and will have you burning the midnight oil in order to reach Doh. A polished game that will appeal to all fans of the original" – ST Action
XENON "The graphics are superb, the installations and explosions are wonderfully drawn" – ACE
CRAZY CARS "This must be the ultimate car game" – ST World
SUPER HANG ON "The definitive racing game ever for the ST" – ST Action
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Thanatopian accountancy's plain boring, so it's time for some...

BLOOD MONEY

Psygnosis

A megabyte frames of animation on the baddies are not easily ignored. Blood Money is a game that shines with the latest, and best of Psygnosis's superlative presentation. The opening sequence has arcade-quality tumbling asteroids and excellent music including *Loadsamoney* samples. There's no way a game can live up to such a great intro ...but *Blood Money* does.

The scenario features Alien Safari Promotions, the supremely daft concept of future holidaymakers going on a shoot-'em-up tour of four alien planets where the average life expectancy is a couple of seconds. You're the usually dutiful son Spondulix, a Venusian studying accountancy on Thanatopia 32 and just about to blow your parents' money on said Safari.

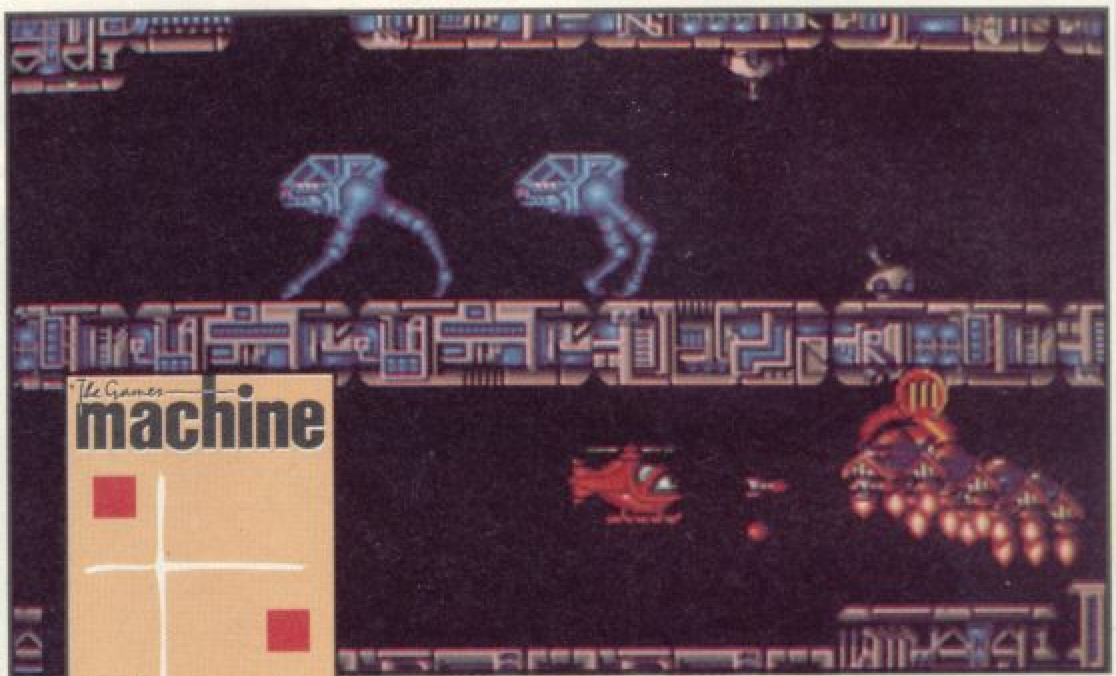
200 credits gives you a choice of two of the four planets to visit. Planet one is explored by helicopter, and is largely mechanical with gun turrets, walkers, rocket silos and so on. Planet two is completely different, requiring a submarine to blast through jellyfish, crabs and enemy subs. Complete these levels with enough cash and you can go on to planet three — an icy planet with oceans you zoom over in a jet-pack equipped spacesuit — or planet four, blood-and-guts time with you in a spaceship.

The graphic styles of the levels are completely different, and utterly impressive. To start off with the scenery scrolls horizontally, but occasionally it switches to vertical — which can be embarrassing if you're hugging the roof at the time!

At certain places in the worlds there's equipment lockers, pop inside one and you get a choice of various add-ons. They all cost money of course, which is earned by shooting aliens and collecting the coins they drop. Products are in short supply, so if two are playing it's a race to get the last Neuron Bomb in stock.

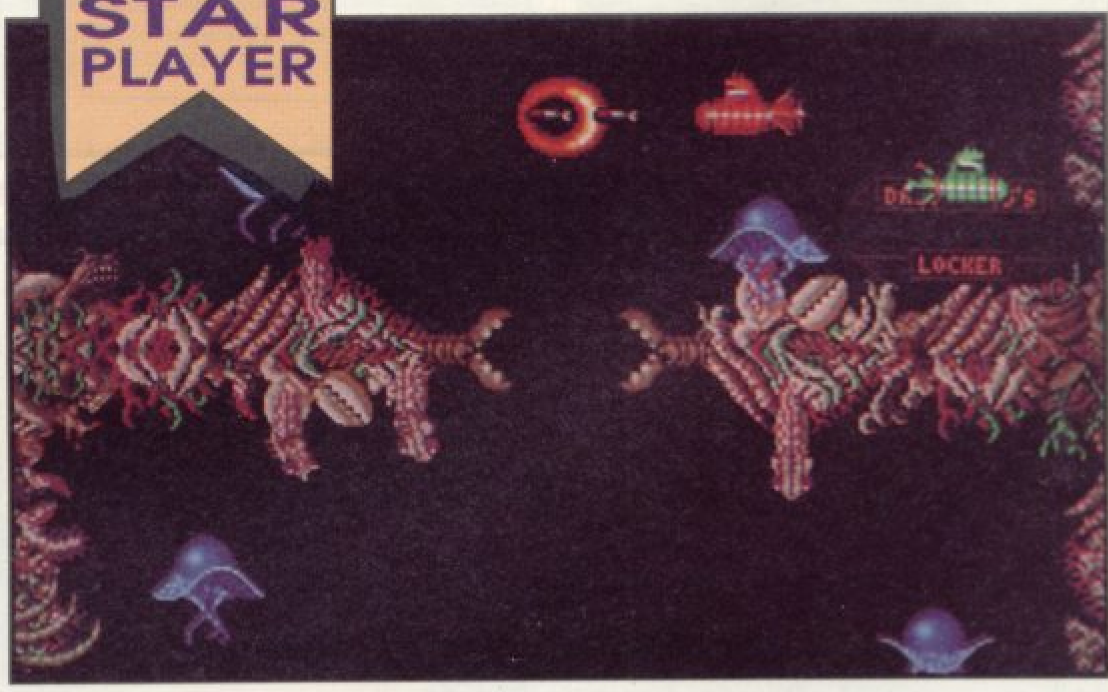
Add-ons include upward or downward firing missiles, rear-firing missiles, long-range missiles, bombs, speed-ups, extra-energy and extra life. Needless to say all are needed, because this is one tough blast-'em-up.

Programmer David Jones's previous game was the unoriginal, but nevertheless highly enjoyable shoot-'em-up *Menace*. *Blood Money* is tougher, better looking, more inventive and even more playable. In one-player mode it's great, in two it's incredible fun with players either rushing to grab coins and add-ons or, more sensibly, providing each other with covering fire. The only slight drawback is the price — £24.95 is a lot for a shoot-'em-up even if it is probably the best around.



The Games machine STAR PLAYER

Irridescent, irrepressible and utterly playable, **Blood Money** *is an instant Amiga winner*



AMIGA 90%

£24.95

David Jones's programming has produced time and power for lots of fully animated enemies, and Tony Smith has certainly made use of it with consistently top-notch aliens and great backgrounds too. Even if gameplay were not so addictive, trying to see yet more of the graphics would keep you playing long into the night. Sound is excellent: there's a top quality intro track, and good in-game music or sound FX. The perfectly smooth and apparently effortless way everything moves, even in two-player mode, is a delight.

OTHER FORMATS

Work is progressing on an Atari ST version, but Psygnosis say that they are working to the full capacity of the Amiga these days, rather than just make games which are suitable to both machines, so there may be some general differences between the versions — we wait to see.

Kick sand California-style

KINGS OF THE BEACH

Electronic Arts

Continuing in their recent health kick (you had to be fit to *Skate or Die*...), Electronic Arts bring us another all-American sport called Beach Volleyball. The first task is to head for the registration point — you can't miss it, it's a dirty great tent in the centre of the screen.

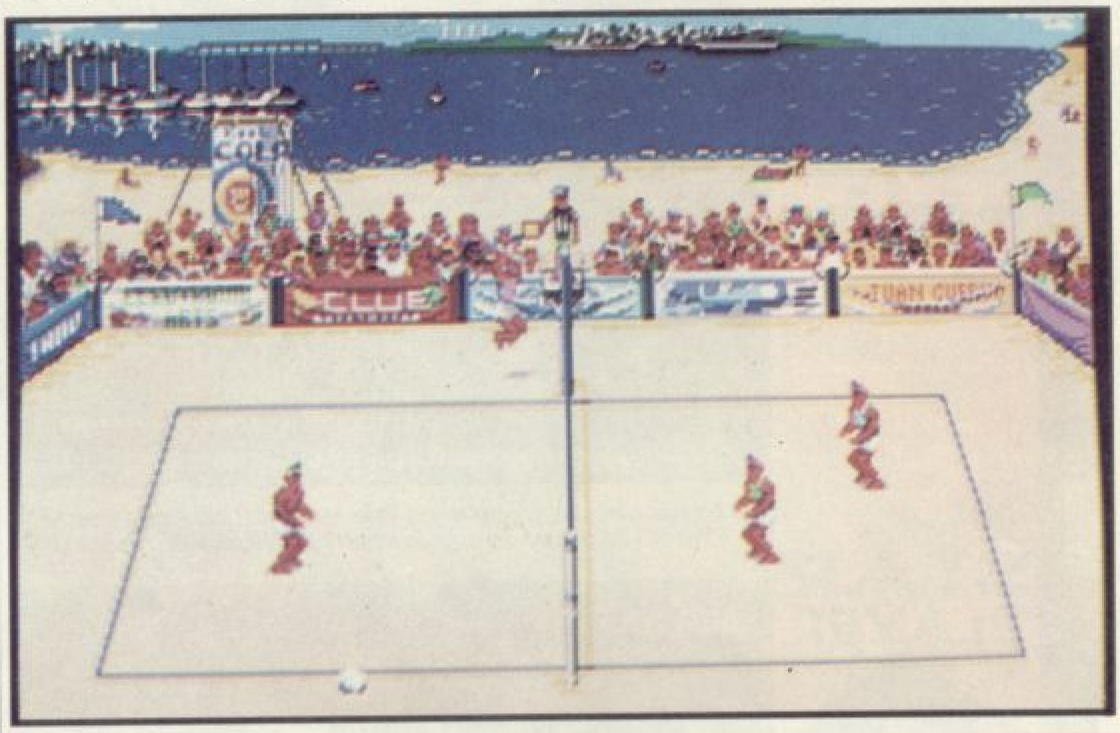
Here a leggy Californian beauty almost wearing a bikini greets you and asks whether you want to play either Randy Stoklos or Sinjin Smith (not exactly prepossessing names, but what the hell — this is California).

There are two playing modes: cooperative and competitive. In two-player mode cooperative means both players are on the same side. Now set the difficulty level, turn the sound on or off, enter a password (if you have won a Tournament) and return to the beach.

Practice courts have been thoughfully provided allowing volleyballing skills to be honed. Bumps (a defensive move where, with hands clasped, the forearms are used to deflect the ball as it rockets over the net and is about to hit the sand), sets (position the ball near to the net) and spikes (a punch with clenched fists to send the ball fast into the opposing court) can all be performed against a computer-controlled opponent until you feel confident enough to tackle either a match or a tournament.

In matches — usually the best to start with — after one game the winner takes all. You're presented with a 'court' comprising a net, referee perched on top of a skyscraper of a chair and four players (two on each team). The first team to score 15 points is deemed winner.

Tournaments require three wins in order to move to the next beach, which may be in Rio, or Hawaii, or a number of exotic locations where you can show off your prowess and impress the volley dollies.



£24.95

PC 78%

Kings of the Beach **is great fun, once the practice courts have been visited a few times (the first few attempts usually end with you collecting a facefull of sand). The game is very colourful and contains some amusing attention to detail such as players brushing the sand off themselves after taking falls, or venting frustration by kicking the sand in annoyance. And, for this country at least,** Kings of the Beach **introduces us to an unfamiliar outdoor sport.**

Much improved future chariot racing

POWERDROME

The Games Machine STAR UPDATE

Electronic Arts ■ Amiga: £24.95
Atari ST 93% — TGM013

Chariot racing of the future was first experienced on the ST. Michael Powell took note of the criticism of the first version very little we would have thought) and amazingly he's improved on the game. The Amiga game is a tad faster and as a result easier to get into, with the control method tweaked slightly so you can get to grips quickly with Typhoon flying.

With solid 3-D graphics, there's little leeway for graphic diversity between 16-bit versions. *Powerdrome* is no exception to this hard and fast rule, although the sound is all the better through the Amiga's stereo capabilities. An RS232-link is also available for human vs human duels.

The element of racing at break-neck speed around a twisting, turning and often very fast-paced racecourse would make for a superb game in its own right. With a comprehensive craft customisation screen, a demanding on-going challenge, speed to keep the pace very much alive, an unbeatable illusion of movement and long term appeal, *Powerdrome* is the ultimate future racing game. There's one roller-coaster ride after another, as the Typhoons give no quarter in one vicious race around equally vicious courses. Holding onto your stomach has never been so much fun.

TGM ppdate 94%

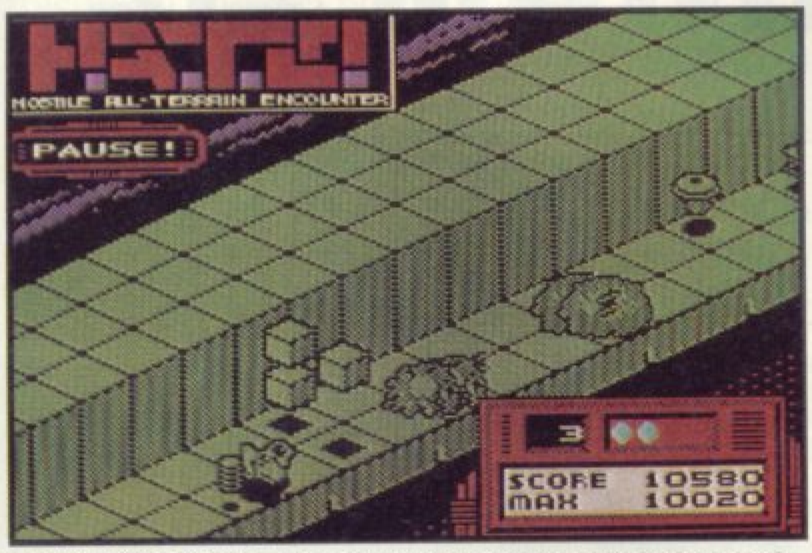


Costa Panayi strikes back with hate

HOSTILE ALL TERRAIN ENCOUNTER

Gremlin Graphics

There's more trouble brewing at t'Milky Way, aliens warring on mankind, threatening genocide, you know the sort of thing. That's why you're at the Galactic Pilot Training Centre wanting to become a a combat pilot. Trainees are given control of two vehicles: a star fighter and a ground assault vehicle — and Lord help anyone who crashes them.



The familiar graphics routines of Costa Panayi on the Spectrum

The first thing to distinguish *HATE* from other current shoot-'em-ups is its welcome return to the three-quarter view 3-D format exemplified by *Zaxxon*. You start in the star fighter with four lives and 30 levels of gruelling action ahead of you. Many obstacles lie in your path both mobile and stationary. These include ground skimming projectiles, mine barriers, intelligent missiles and enemy star ships.

The aim of each section, apart from dodging nasties and negotiating the hilly terrain, is to collect scattered plasma cells, which have two functions: to act as lives (if you end a level with two cells, you have two lives for the next) and as fuel for the vehicle you control on the next section. It follows that it's essential to end a section with at least one cell in tow or lose a life. The plasma cells are protected by a tough shell which has to be shot several times before the cell is freed.

HATE is by veteran Spectrum programmer Costa Panayi of Vortex — remember classics like *Androids I* and *II*, *TLL* and especially *Highway Encounter*. In some ways *HATE* reminds us a little of the latter in both in graphics and playability. The going is tough, but if you persevere the sheer pulse-pounding action as the alien horde swirls around you soon drags you in. Long-term playability may be more doubtful.

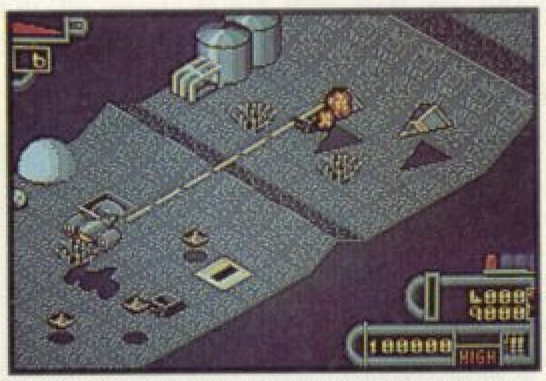
SPECTRUM 80%

£9.99 cass ££4.99 disk

Mild annoyance may be felt when you are sent back a level once you die (from Level 3 onwards), but at least this is better than a longwinded multiload. The mono graphics thankfully cause no colour clash, though they do cause some spatial confusion at times, making aliens a pain to get past.

OTHER FORMATS

Commodore 64/128 and Amstrad versions at £9.99 cass and £14.99 disk, ST and Amiga at £19.99 should be available in early May. The ST graphics look particularly great.



With its greater colour capability, the ST version of HATE looks as though it's going to be something special for action fans

VERSION UPDATES

COMMODORE 64/128 ■ AMSTRAD CPC ■ AMIGA

The Real Ghostbusters

ACTIVISION 8-bit £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk, Amiga £24.99
Spectrum 86% — TGM018

In descending order of quality:
It's strange that although C64 *Ghostbusters* is much older than *Real Ghostbusters*, the music on this latest Activision licence is notably worse, though still lively (as are the sound effects). Smooth-scrolling backgrounds are grainy and speckled, while sprites are generally small and indistinct, not helped by black outlining. Quite a playable Commando variant.

The colour scheme is dim green and orange on the Amstrad — not exactly attractive — and scrolling's jerky, but characters have the same well drawn detail of the Spectrum. Effects are standard Amstrad but the music is jolly.

Detail of the Amiga pre-game scene, where Ecto-1 draws up in front of a haunted house, bodes well. But one look at the character sprite reveals the truth. Lacking in detail, he walks jerkily (two frames of animation) and stupidly, and is matched in low quality by the wandering monsters. Slimer is a particular example of the slip-shod definition. Bland backgrounds are drawn in bad perspective. Music and effects are loud but, like the game, nothing special.



Amiga ghostbusting for real

TGM update:
Commodore 64/128 78%
Amstrad CPC 74%
Amiga 57%

AMIGA

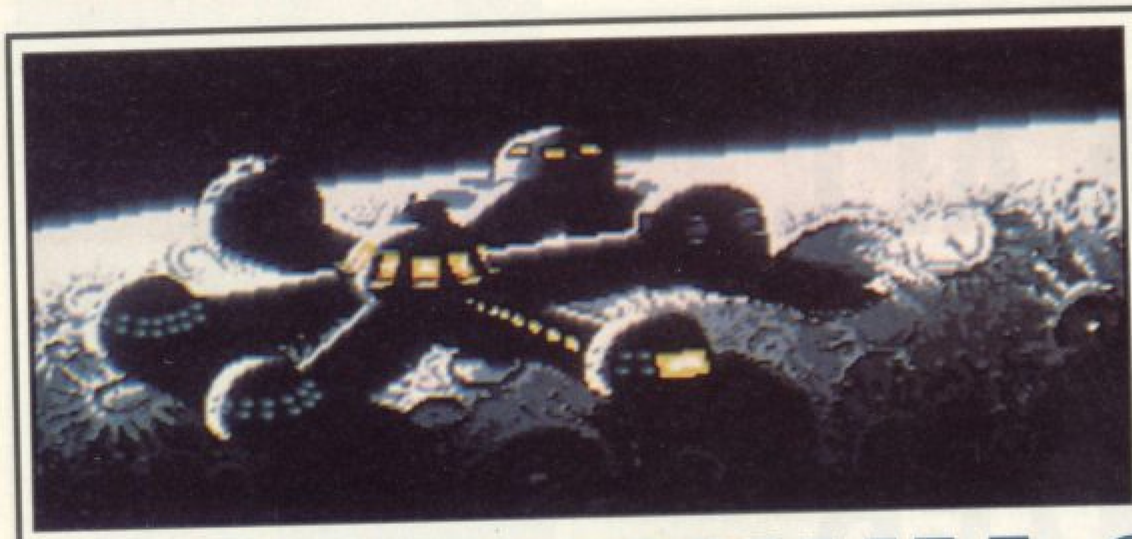
Airball

MICRODEAL n £19.95
Atari ST 85% — TGM002

We've waited rather a long time for the Amiga *Airball*, strange when you consider there's no real differences between this and the very attractive Atari ST version. The wildly anarchic ball is tough to control at first, but practice soon reveals a playable arcade puzzle game.

TGM update 80%





MILLENNIUM 2.2

Electric Dreams

The Games Machine STAR PLAYER

The first release for the new, original titles-only Electric Dreams label has been heralded as a software classic to rank with Elite and Dungeon Master. Playtesters have, apparently, played for 30 hours or so without completing this epic space adventure...

The game begins in 2200, a 20 billion tonne asteroid has slammed into the Earth with an environmental impact which would give Greenpeace a collective heart attack _ if the shockwaves, hurricane-force winds and molten rock hadn't already killed everyone on Earth. The only humans left are the few hundred living on bases on the Moon and Mars. You're the commander of Moon Base and it's your responsibility to ensure the survival of the human race. To do this you must first expand Moon Base, then colonise other planets and moons with the ultimate aim of re-establishing life on Earth.

Initially your task seems extremely daunting. Moon Base has just 100 people in seven, interlinked domes. The most important dome is obviously Life Support, and by clicking on it you can review the population status. But this is purely a report screen, the decisions which affect it are taken elsewhere. The Energy dome, for example, initially uses batteries, and if these run out...

Fortunately there's a Solagen (Solar Power Generator) Mk I, turn it on and you get power to activate the Resource, or mining dome. The minerals produced here can be used by the Production dome to make more powerful Solagens, as well as probes, spaceships, orbital lasers and so forth. Construction can't start, however, until plans have been produced by the Research dome. Click on this and you can choose to research all sorts of hardware, as well as planets for colonisation. Only one project at a time can be undertaken, and to research planets you must first land a probe on them.

Probes, and most of the other spaceships are launched by the Hanger dome where you can load or unload cargo, crew ships and even scrap them. Once a spaceship is launched into Lunar orbit you can choose to send it to any of the Solar System's planets or moons _ and there's a lot, most a very long way away. A trip to Pluto takes several hundred days _ so it's as well that beside a disk save option, there's an accelerate time feature (you can click on this repeatedly, and if something happens a notice flashes up).

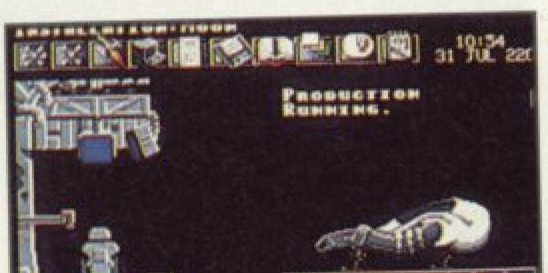


In all your exploration you inevitably encounter an enemy who launches periodic raids against your base(s). Defence can either be by automatic orbital lasers or fighters. Launch a fighter and you're presented with a pilot's perspective of battle, with a solid 3-D enemy fighter whirling around you. It's simple, but fast, and an enjoyable break from all the strategic thinking.

To be honest basic gameplay is, however complex it may sound, rather simple and easy. The icon-control system is excellent and soon becomes second-nature. The first real problem is obtaining minerals which aren't available on the Moon; the solution isn't immediately apparent but once solved a routine soon evolves of shipping the materials home which is a bit tedious.

Yet gameplay is always compelling because, in addition to the basic strategic/arcade elements, there's a big adventure element _ power plants blow up, colonists mutate and so on. Living long enough to see what the next surprise will be is one of the most addictive part of the game. Unfortunately these adventure elements hardly vary from game to game, so once completed (15-20 hours if you don't want a top score) there's little incentive to play again and it is a bit easy. Nevertheless *Millennium 2.2* is one of the most mesmerising games available, offering the depth of a classic SF adventure without any of the wordplay hassles. Highly recommended.

Superlatively atmospheric space graphics bring a touch of Stanley Kurbick's vision to the ST



ATARI ST 87%

£19.99

Atmospheric sound effects, superbly rendered static screens and a great icon system add up to one of the best presented strategy/adventure games around. Played late at night you get a great feeling of 'being there', and you can even blast enemy spaceships in a fun arcade section. A true 16-bit game.

MIXING Business WITH LEISURE WILL BE A REAL EDUCATION

Commodore computer show

Britain's brightest event for Commodore computer users is back! And there's more to see than ever before.

This show has three main themes covering some of the major uses to which Commodore machines are put. There are over 70 key companies who will be exhibiting their latest products, which means that just about everything that's new in the Commodore world will be on show!

Business

Many companies will be demonstrating their latest software and hardware, specially designed to release the full business potential of Commodore computers.

As well as products for the C64 and Amiga series, you'll be able to try out applications for the price-beating Commodore PC compatible micros.

And you'll also be able to attend seminars covering all aspects of using Commodore micros in your business.

Leisure

The C64 and Amiga computers are the most powerful 8 and 16 bit micros for producing fast-action arcade quality games. The range of new software on show will demonstrate how these machines' power is continually being stretched, producing faster and even more addictive games with superb graphics.

If you're a keen game player, you'll find there's so much on offer at the show you're guaranteed a real treat!

Novotel Exhibition Complex, Hammersmith, London W6

Friday to Sunday
June 2 to 4

10am-6pm Friday & Saturday; 10am-4pm Sunday

Education

Commodore micros are now used as educational tools all over the country. With the development of BBC Basic on the Amiga, and the advent of Desktop Video (combining TV pictures with text and graphics), the range of educational applications is endless.

At the show you'll see how the latest software packages are making real breakthroughs in the educational sector, and be able to try them out for yourself.

Special Events

As well as special events and presentations, you'll also be able to meet some of your favourite celebrities, and maybe get a chance to talk with them about how they use micros in their work.

So for a great day out, whether you want to see what the future holds for Commodore computers, to buy the latest software or to get advice on specific applications, the Commodore show is the place to go. And if you send in the coupon today, we'll knock £1 off the price of each ticket!

● ***For the first time we are offering a family ticket for just £11 allowing entry for two adults and two children – saving up to £7 off the usual entry price!***

How To Get There
By Underground: *Hammersmith (Piccadilly, Metropolitan & District).*
By Bus: *266, 714, 716, 290, 30, 72, 73, 74.*
Car parking facilities available at the Novotel.

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AMC4



Moore than your average arcade adventure

THE KRISTAL

Addictive Games

Originally designed in 1976 as musical comedy called *The Kristal of Kronos*, despite Elaine Page recording some of its songs it never actually made it onto the stage. For a long while thereafter the project remained in limbo, but then 16-bit machines arrived and the computer game was started.

Unlike most computer versions of films, or plays, *The Kristal* is an uncompromising attempt to replicate the plot of the original rather than merely dressing-up a standard arcade adventure with some new sprites. As a result *The Kristal* comes on four double-sided disks.

The story unsurprisingly revolves around the Kristal of Kronos, a mystical object once contained within the Halls of Love. Acting under the influence of the incredibly evil Ono, the weak-willed Malagar stole the Kristal, causing the Halls to collapse as he escaped. Needless to say this didn't please the Halls' oldest resident, the Essence, which promptly destroyed Malagar's ship and took the Kristal back.

To prevent a recurrence of the previous incident the Essence hid the Kristal in a secret chamber that only the pure of heart could enter.

One such insufferably pure person is Dancis Frake, whose role you take after a 30-second intro by Patrick Moore. The game takes place over ten different planetary systems, with around 50 characters with which to interact. Talking with people is via text input, and the parser is surprisingly good, even allowing you to make improper suggestions to the various busty ladies — with unexpected consequences.

But if interaction fails it's time for combat, with an impressively animated bit of swordplay to engage in. Survive that and you can travel to other planets via 17th century galleons propelled by oars! You stand at the helm, ready with the cannon, to blast such potential attackers as winged space termites!

Needless to say the tongue-in-cheek humour of the original stage project has been retained to give *The Kristal* a consistently amusing touch, which adds further polish to its superb presentation. Of course, many a game attempts to get by on good graphics alone, particularly on the Amiga, but *The Kristal* isn't one of them. The problems you face are numerous and fairly complex, but as yet we haven't encountered anything irritatingly obscure.

In addition the characters and objects are always moving around, reducing the problem of repetition. So if you fancy your chances as a swashbuckling space hero in an epic space fantasy, this is the one for you. With such a high level of presentation, and superbly involved gameplay, a £30 price tag seems completely justified for once.

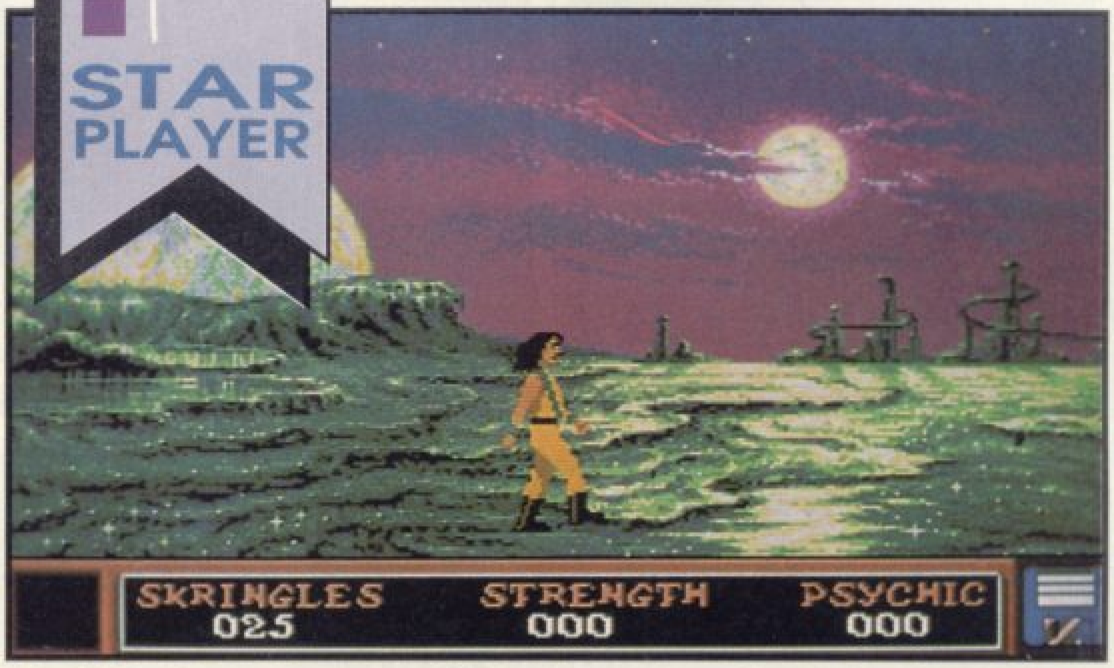
OTHER VERSIONS

An ST version is due fairly soon, while a PC version making best use of CGA, VGA and EGA is a bit further off, but all versions will be the same price: £29.99.

£29.99 AMIGA **90%**

Without doubt this is one of the best presented games available, comparable to anything Cinemaware have done. There's a great sampled speech by Patrick Moore to start things off, good spot FX and a haunting title tune as well. Graphics are even better with impressively animated sprites set against startlingly beautiful backdrops which you can fully explore. The complexity of gameplay, with some attractive subgames, make this one of the best arcade adventures ever.

The Games machine STAR PLAYER



The Kristal ***is an uncompromising attempt to replicate the plot of the original stage musical rather than merely dressing-up a standard arcade adventure with some new sprites — and it shows in the graphics.***



Kicking the belom out of innocent creatures

GRAND MONSTER SLAM

Golden Goblins/Rainbow Arts

HodH CrownguarD, the largest in the world of GholD, is the setting of this barbaric fantasy future sport. The time represented in the game is the year 12847, but the history of the bizarre Grand Monster Slam goes way back to 10365, when goblins were at war with humans.

A siege on a desert fortress soon came to a halt when the goblins ran out of ammunition for their giant catapults, and had to fire literally anything they could lay their hands on at the stone walls. The soldiers inhabiting the fortress retaliated by throwing back the goblins' stones, giving them back their ammunition supply.

Three years later, the two races had lost the will for war, made peace and (almost) became friends. In memory of the war, they decided to meet every three years to hold of festival during which they would have a friendly commemorative catapult fight. Other races became involved in the tri-annual competition, qualifying for the honour by declaring war on the goblins and humans then rapidly making peace (often about five minutes after commencing hostilities!). Soon all intelligent forms of life on GholD had heard of the contest and most were a part of its festivities.

Through time, it became a refined one-on-one knockout (sometimes literally!) sport. Catapults were rejected in favour of good old fashioned arm power and the unlucky beloms, small furry creatures, became the ammo. Their part in the games became more uncomfortable still when it was decided they should be kicked at the opposition rather than thrown.

You take the active part in the latest change to the sport now named Grand Monster Slam, performing in the boots of a dwarf, the first time a member of their race has competed. You face one of the other seven participants of League One of 12847's championship.

In all matches, you are shown at the bottom of the screen, standing at your baseline with six beloms spread in front of you. These are kicked up the pitch in one of three directions and at a strength determined by the fire button. The main aim is to kick all your boms (short for beloms) away from your baseline so that none remain, then sprint across the pitch to the opposition's baseline to win the game. Naturally, he/she/it will be trying to do the same, so you must move fast to stop the boms mounting up. Knocking the opponent down with a well-aimed bom gives you some time to catch up, or hopefully win.


The world of HodH CrownguarD and its strange citizens comes to life in this quirky game

Kicking a belom into the audience invokes a penalty. After choosing a direction to jump, a duck-like creature is kicked

AMIGA 76%

£19.99

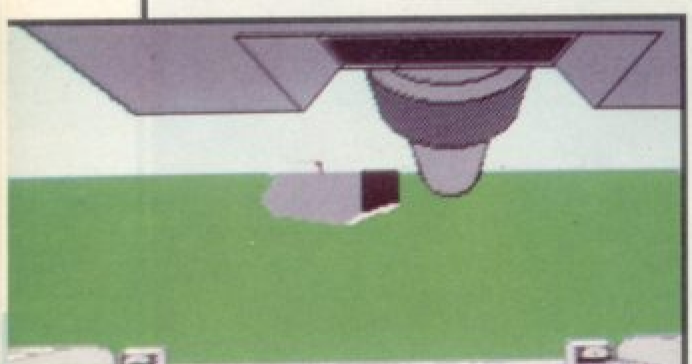
A triumphant medieval tune begins the game. The great composition and quality sounds it uses set the high standard of the sound track, which is rounded off by samples of crowd and grunting players. The graphics match this standard; detailed, colourful and well animated sprites and equally well drawn profile portraits. Each competitor has his/her/its own character, particularly the beloms (the stars of the show!), who quake in fear or sit bug-eyed and petrified, depending on your proximity. Strange creatures, indeed.

Tanks, but I'll forget it

ABRAMS BATTLE TANK

Electronic Arts

Grab your fighting gear and be prepared to take battle in the most advanced tank in its class. EA are inviting all hunks to blow the hell out of those Red Ruskies once more, this time in a Dynamix-designed game.


Russians ahead: it's comforting to be in an M1A1 Abrams tank

EA's latest simulation plunges you into the action, drama and exhilaration (?) of a conventional Third World War. Controlling an M1A1 tank, it's your duty as commander to take on the might of the Soviet Army through eight separate missions, in a desperate battle for survival and victory.

Joystick and keyboard driven, you have overall control of the vehicle: be it driving, controlling the gun turret, firing or navigation. This theatre of war is set in West Germany — and there are a plenty of actors. But with skill, stamina and the strength of possibly the world's finest military attack vehicle, you could survive, and who knows, deter the unthinkable — a full nuclear attack.

Well, you could do, had *Abrams Battle Tank* been more user-friendly than it actually is. The biggest problem with the simulation is that it attempts to simulate something that has yet to happen. Why couldn't EA have set the game in something like the Afghanistan conflict, for example? And why always against the Soviet Union anyway? However, enough with the politics...

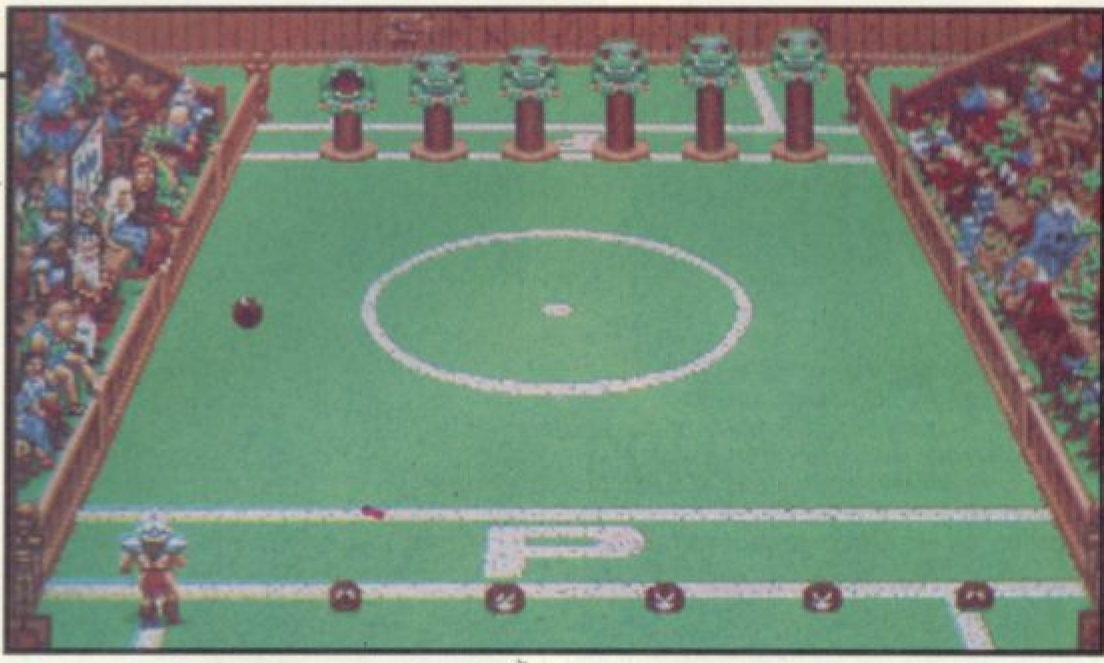
PC 58%

£24.95

Graphically, Abrams Battle Tank is less than inspiring, with poor definition and slow, jerky animation. Unusual for the PC, when titles such as Dark Side et al, with the same graphics style, update at a much faster rate. Sound is particularly unimpressive, consisting mainly of a horrific, bubbly whine (supposedly engine noise) which adds nothing, and probably detracts, from the overall atmosphere of the program.

Being a simulator, there are a host of different key controls, and while most of them are generally useful, there are some which have simply been repeated in other modes. In fact, it is these admittedly-impressive — but rather useless — extra options which go a long way to seriously slowing down gameplay.

Abrams Battle Tank, while not being an imperative purchase, could provide a few lazy hours of pleasure to ardent simulation fans, offering a new angle from the normal plane/helicopter idea.



Barbaric sport: it's okay for the people, but cruel to Boms, Goms and Lizards? Animal Rights should have a field-day...

towards you. If it knocks you down, the opposition gains points, but luckily he too can make illegal shots.

After each match one, the Revenge of the Beloms must be faced. Boms attack from eight directions (aiming for a ticklish point) but you, as a dwarf sprite, have a 'shove-off pole' with which to defend yourself.

If a league is won (three matches must first be won) the Remarkable Six Faultons are faced! These small lizards sit atop pillars of various heights and you have one attempt to kick a gom into each faulton's gaping mouth — the trajectory of the gom is determined by fire button depression.

The first thing that strikes you with *Grand Monster Slam* is the high quality presentation; great music begins on the title screen before leading you to the menu, complete with practice options, animated competitor fixtures, and mini-profile on your opponent. The actual game is very very simple, though: just kick the boms as quickly as you can. Being able to knock down your opponent with a shot adds something, particularly as there's the ability to direct them, but usually you're too involved with getting rid of the boms — and avoiding the ones kicked toward you — that you don't have time to aim.

Nevertheless, *Grand Monster Slam* is a source of real if limited fun, that misses out on playability by excluding the obvious option of a two-player game (shame).

OTHER FORMATS

Atari ST, PC (both £19.99) and Commodore 64 (cass £9.99, disk £12.99) should have hit the streets on the approximate release date of May 11.

VERSION UPDATES

PC
Nebulus
HEWSON £24.99
Spectrum 87%, C64 90% — TGM002, Atari ST 89%, Amiga 89% — TGM013



John Phillips's cute novelty of a revolving platform game made a big 8-bit hit 18 months ago. The game's hero, Pogo, has to climb sevral towers set in an ocean. The towers apparently revolve, thus keeping Pogo centre-screen, while you follow him ever higher up their exterior spiral staircases. Frequently he has to cut through the width of a tower to reach another ascending staircase, until he reaches the top. Aliens dissuade him from his task by either killing him or knocking him off a step. The PC game is as attractive to look at and as fiendishly playable as any of the earlier verisons.

TGM Update 83%

AMSTRAD CPC
Stormlord
HEWSON £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Spectrum 86% — TGM018

What is surprising is that for once it's not a straight port across, instead Raf has made excellent use of Mode 2 graphics to show off the maachines's colourful palette. Sound is effective as well, with some neat spot FX. Gameplay is on the one hand easier than the Spectrum's because it's a touch slower, on the other tougher because of a tight time limit.

A tough, but addictive arcade adventure which makes good use of the Amstrad, this deserves to do very well indeed.

TGM update 84%

On the Seventh Day...
POPULOUS

Electronic Arts ■ Atari ST £24.95
Amiga — 90% Issue 17

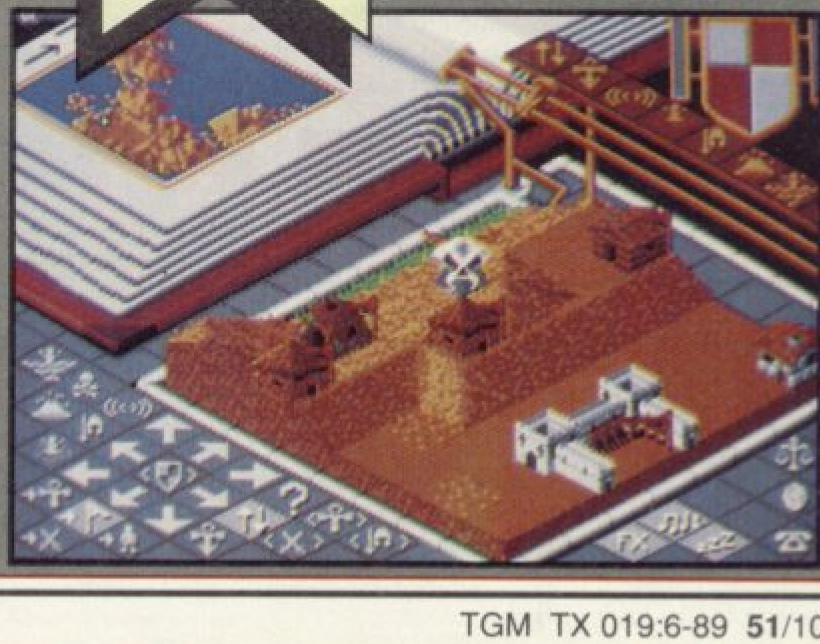
Bullfrog created the game *Populous* and review magazines saw that it was good, bestowing on it all their tributes, including even a TGM Top Score (will wonders never cease?). But while there was sublime rapture among Amiga owners, there was a great wailing and gnashing of teeth among ST owners who were deprived of The Great Game. Bullfrog saw this tragedy, and benevolently granted to them *Populous* as well. And the review magazines looked at this new version and they awarded it yet more tributes...

The Great Game allows one or two players (via a modem connection) to take the part of either God or the Devil in their holy conflict across 500 worlds. Should you be victorious on one world a password is given to jump a couple of levels to another. Each level contains two warring groups of people. To win you must build up enough energy to feel confident of winning an apocalypse where all the people engage in total war. To build up energy you must have lots of people, which is achieved by levelling the ground around farms — allowing them to expand — and bashing the enemy who're trying to kill them. As your energy increases you can attack the enemy with earthquakes, swamps, volcanoes, floods and even knights (who wander around burning enemy huts).

Once you know what all the icons mean gameplay is simple, relatively fast and completely addictive. The ST game duplicates the Amiga graphics perfectly, but sadly the soundtrack and atmospheric heartbeat are missing leaving only effective spot FX.

But with gameplay this addictive that's only a minor point, this is an essential purchase.

TGM update 90%



High rewards for willing heroes

MAYDAY SQUAD

Tynesoft

If you thought the SAS were tough, you obviously haven't heard about the Mayday Squad. When the police, army et cetera can't sort out a dangerous situation they call one of these three-man teams, established by the United Nations Security Council to combat international terrorism.

One of the squad's most thrilling missions is portrayed in *Mayday Squad*, the computer game. The Lutonian Embassy has been overrun by the previously unknown terrorist group The Red Legion. The Legion are threatening to blow up the Embassy at sundown if their demands are not met (though quite what the demands are the game fails to say).

Worse still, the Lutonian Ambassador's daughter is trapped inside, too scared to leave her hiding place for fear of capture and being taken hostage. Members of The Red Legion have already begun to search the Embassy, so even if the noble building can be saved, the daughter may be in for a nasty time...

You first view a number of profiles in order to choose the three-man team you want to guide. Each team must comprise a leader (who is also a gunsman), communications expert (picks locks, uses computers etc) and a demolitions expert (deals with explosives and deactivating traps).

Each member of the team is controlled individually (using a pointer with onscreen direction arrows) and viewed from behind, their head and shoulders are shown at the bottom of the screen as corridor junctions and doors are approached in perspective.

The leader is used simply to explore and shoot terrorists. The communications expert has a number of functions accessed from a menu, such as search, use computer and use listening device. The demolitions expert can perform special tasks like laying a booby trap, throwing a grenade and setting a 30-minute time bomb.

Coincidentally or not, *Mayday Squad* plays similarly to the interior level of Infogrames' *Hostages*. Indeed, with the same sort of Embassy and terrorist plot and the same graphical viewpoint, it's very like the French product. However, *Mayday Squad* has more than the shoot-and-run play of *Hostages*: there's a bigger area to explore and with the two 'experts' you can do a lot more than just gun people down.

Both versions advance the characters in graphical steps rather than scrolling in perspective, so that when a room is entered (after gaining access by picking the lock, machine-gunning the door or blowing it up with a grenade!) there's a sense of anticipation as to whether there will be a gun-toting terrorist or two laying in wait! The game isn't as slick on the Commodore 64, though, losing out on the atmosphere and compelling action, but it's still a good buy for heroic soldiers of fortune everywhere.



C64/128 63%

£9.95 cass £14.95 disk

The Squad member portraits on the selection screen are well drawn, but in the game background graphics are blocky and ugly, with terrorists vaguely defined, bald with weirdly shaped heads. Illogical things happen like killed terrorists simply disappearing and destroyed doors remaining visually unchanged. Sound effects are dull accompanied by inappropriate bleeps.

AMIGA 83%

£19.95

Some cute little character graphics accompany the variables on the option screen, and this trend is continued in the game. While the graphics aren't fantastically detailed (the backgrounds are sparse) they're colourful and cartoon-like, despite being largely unanimated. The occasional sound effects are sampled and the title music is effectively grim but repetitive. Some great simulated newspaper pages round off each game.

OTHER FORMATS

Atari ST (£19.95) and PC (£24.95) versions are now available.

VERSION UPDATES

AMIGA

Crazy Cars II

TITUS £19.95
Atari ST 82% — TGM016

Apparently little attempt has been made to improve the Amiga version because, apart from the enhanced sound effects, this is virtually identical to the ST game. And maybe it's an illusion, but the controls seem a mite over-sensitive, because very often little effort is needed to spin the car off the road. Otherwise, as racing games go, *Crazy Cars II* provides plenty of fun.

TGM Update 77%

ATARI ST

Airborne Ranger

MICROPROSE £24.95
Commodore 64 82% — TGM003, Spectrum 73%, PC 78% — TGM014, Amstrad CPC 60% — TGM018

MicroProse are branching out in all directions at the moment but Airborne Ranger reaffirms the company's military origins. The game involves 12 missions of Commando-style action and a lot of thought. The sprites are well-defined, but colour isn't used to the game's advantage (who's ever seen blue-uniformed soldiers?). Despite the smooth-scrolling play area, and due to the over-use of colour, much of the gritty realism and atmosphere found in the 64 and PC versions is lost — however, the central premise of combining tactical and arcade skills goes some way to compensating this. An acceptable conversion.

TGM update 70%

SPECTRUM

Vindicators

TENGEN £8.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Atari ST 88%, Amstrad 89% — TGM018

With the Amstrad and ST conversions of *Vindicators*, Tengen's computer debut couldn't have been better. Sadly, the Spectrum is not the machine to show off Domark's newest licence. With just a monochrome display, the game quickly becomes tedious. Spectrum *Vindicators* is not helped by graphics, which are detailed enough, but lack variation. Considering the Amstrad version, a real disappointment.

TGM update 57%

Fighting the thrust of gravity

RAIDER

Impressions

Life in space isn't a bunch of roses at the best of times. With the general lack of oxygen, a ten-month wait for mail and no chance of holidays, life could be considerably better. They could be rosier for the Empire too.

The Imperial Border Navies have rebelled and taken command of eight planets, and vital pods needed to keep powerplants running on each planet have been stolen — cue a combined meltdown set to vaporise the Empire and leave no trace.

To save the Empire, you are sent in a combination combat craft to destroy all resistance, recover the powerplants and replace them in their reactors. Protecting their own interests with gun emplacements, the rebels have also hidden each pod from view with cloaking devices. Only by destroying the guns can you locate the pod, pick it up and thrust away to the next planet.

Guns are often hidden deep in caverns and underground corridors — dextrous thrusting and judicious shield use is all there is to keep you from scraping the rocky surfaces or running into bullets. And with the constant pressure of a rapidly decreasing energy supply, picking up fuel pods at every opportunity is a good idea.

Once four pods are in the ship's hold, you can enter a powerplant and tame the meltdown. By travelling to the core and inserting the pods the powerplant comes back on line, but it's best to make sure you aren't in the reactor when it does spark back into life.

There are four planet types, changing from normal to inverted gravity and limited visibility 'dark zones' on later levels where a hi-tech 'torch' is provided. A password system allows for play to continue from the last successfully restored powerplant. *Thrust*, the ancient coin-op *Gravitar* and *Oids* come to mind; all are satisfyingly simple and highly playable games. *Raider* is similar, but sadly it doesn't expand enough on them, preferring to rely too much on differing planet conditions to offer the challenge — and it's not enough to hold interest.

Raider falls between stools, lacking *Oids*'s sparkle and involvement while missing the chance for greater commercial success at the pricing level of *Thrust*. Fans of the former programs may well revel in *Raider*'s ideas, but interest quickly wanes once all eight planets have been visited..



Raiders: ***some new ideas on the Oids theme, but lacking sparkle***

AMIGA 58%

£19.99

The different planets incorporate excellent detail and graphic quality but the colouring and presentation isn't as subtle or classy as in Oids. Sound effects can never help much in this type of game but the detail in the combat craft and guns could have been better.

OTHER FORMATS

An Atari ST version at the same price is expected soon.

There's a grisly scene awaiting you at...

BUTCHER HILL

Gremlin Graphics

Every war has a 'hill' — Edge Hill (Civil War), Pork Chop Hill War (Korea) and Butcher Hill (Vietnam, according to Gremlin) and there must be others... Hills are there to be taken for no other reason than they're there and the enemy don't want you to have them.

The enemy camp on Butcher Hill's the target, but first you navigate a jungle river in a dinghy, grabbing canisters of extra ammunition, energy for the flagging status meter and free bonuses.

Hitting the riverbank, river rushes, lurking mines (though a swift jab of the fire button soon clears a path) or getting strafed by enemy planes loses lives.

Arriving at the end-of-level jetty, you plunge into thick undergrowth where the occasional enemy soldier or landmine is encountered — both fatal, but at least you can blast the soldier. If you picked up a compass on the water section you should be able to find your way around.

In clearings enemy soldiers pop out of buildings and trees, and bonus ammunition and stamina are awarded to sharp shooters who dispose of them all.

At the base of Butcher Hill the camp can be tackled by lobbing grenades into huts. But don't let any of the enemy escape because given the chance they leg it off and call in some reinforcements.

With only three sections, *Butcher Hill* may give the impression that it's a doddle to complete, but don't bet on it. Unless you collect the compass on the river section, for example, you find yourself completely lost in the jungle.



ATARI ST 64%

£19.99

Pictured above: apart from the jungle section, which looks rather atmospheric, the graphics are dull and lifeless (mainly greens and browns), which puts the dampeners on game enjoyment. It isn't quite as playable as the Spectrum version.

SPECTRUM 66%

£7.99 cass
£12.99 disk

Colourful, but with occasional flicker and clash, especially on the river section. The gameplay isn't hampered too much by the annoying loading system.

OTHER FORMATS

Amstrad CPC and Commodore 64/128 versions priced £9.99 cass and £14.99 disk will be available soon, with an Amiga version to follow at £19.99.

Hockey on the rocks

AMERICAN ICE HOCKEY

Mindscape

The growing sport of ice hockey gets another outing in the computer arena, following Anco's simple interpretation in *Face Off* (Atari ST 43%, TGM**018**).

American Ice Hockey has some vague type of plot in that the SportTime Hockey League is going to expand to allow one more team in each of the four leagues. You are the manager/coach/owner of a club, with the obvious aim of improving your league position, possibly gaining promotion, and more optimistic still, winning a cup.

Before a match is played, and subsequently between matches, various facts and figures can be viewed, and those affecting your team adjusted. Team and league histories are a list of statistics (points, matches played, won, lost, drawn etc), which gradually develop as matches and seasons are played.

Your team's improvement is paramount so this has its own menu. You have 1,000 trading points which can be used in a variety of ways. General improvement affects the whole team's performance (as if they'd been sent off to training camp); the more trading points spent the better. Before a player may be recruited, a member of the existing squad must be dropped, a judgment again made with reference to statistics. The new player is named by yourself, and his offensive and defensive skills (indicated by bar graphs) adjusted as desired but only at the cost of trading points.

A player can be traded for one in another team (once their strengths/weaknesses have been assessed) but usually at the expense of trading points.

Players' playing positions can be changed before going to the game screen. Here strip colours, match length and number of players per sideare altered. Control of your team's centre player, goalie and coach can be switched between computer or human control — the systems allow two people to control different members of the team.

Coaching allows you to change the position of players and playing strategies, while total power, effective power, offensive strength and defensive strength are shown as bar graphs to indicate the effectiveness (or otherwise) of your tactics.

Arcade sequences enter the game in the match action sequences, the centre player can perform a number of different shots, with the goalie making a variety of saves.

For sports people who want more than just a few quick thrills, Mindscape have put there usual attention to detail in *American Ice Hockey*. Many facts and figures have to be digested to make decisions; most importantly, care has to be taken when spending precious trading points. Then playing strategies and formations have to be worked out, all before the joystick-wiggling. Luckily, all this is well documented in the manuals (including tips) so with time it all becomes clear. This isn't most people's cup of tea — the arcade elements aren't particularly exciting — but sport or strategy fans should love it.

PC 71%

£24.99

With its use of EGA, the PC version is near identical to the ST, other than the (even) weaker sound due to the PC's feeble audio capabilities.

ATARI ST 79%

£24.99

The statistics, options screens and so on are drab but functional. The pitch graphics are similarly plain and the stick-men sprites lack detail, although animation and movement are fine (scrolling's a bit jerky, though). Music is light and effects simple.

AMIGA 80%

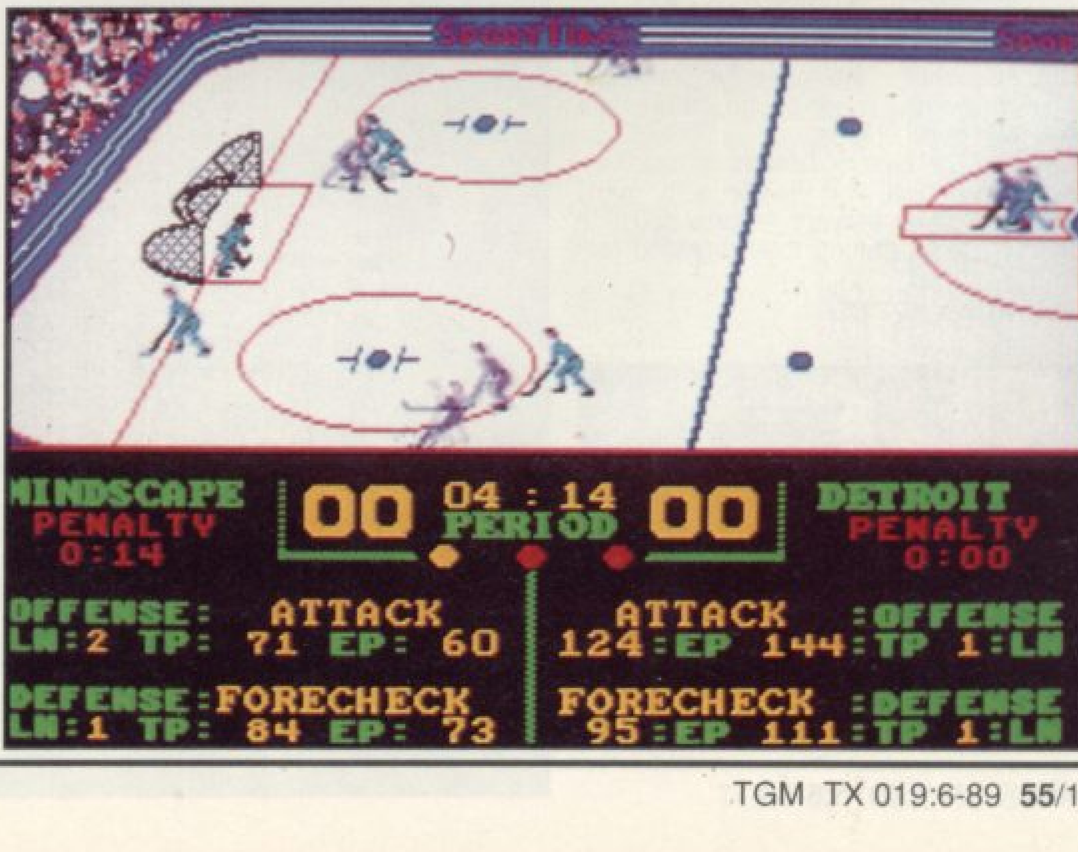
£24.99

Graphically similar to the ST, the sprites are a bit beefier and animation/scrolling a bit better. Music and effects are improved — owners of megabyte Amigas will hear a wide variety of sampled crowd sounds.

OTHER FORMATS

C64 out now, cass £9.99 disk £14.99. No others expected.

A tense moment develops on the ice in the Atari St version below



VERSION UPDATES

MSX

Operation Wolf

OCEAN £8.95 cass, £14.95 disk
Spectrum 87%, Commodore 64/128 79%, Amstrad 89% — TGM013
Atari ST 77%, Amiga 82% — TGM016

To keep speed up, the MSX has had to compromise. Out goes the colour but in comes the speed to ensure frenetic and highly enjoyable gameplay with no strings (or Uzis) attached. Even once completed, *Operation Wolf* has that elusive addictive quality which keeps you coming back again and again to try and beat that high score. Definitely a candidate for one of the best coin-op conversions on the MSX — and all this despite the machine restrictions.

TGM update 81%

AMIGA

Victory Road

Imagine £24.99
Atari ST 55%, Amstrad CPC 70% — TGM018

This has identical graphics to the ST version, although someone has seen sense and made the sprites slightly larger. The ST soundalike tune doesn't help the situation, neither does the slow pace of what should be chaotic blasting carnage and all out action.

TGM update 54%

PC

Times Of Lore

MICROPROSE
Commodore 64 73% — TGM014
Atari ST 59% — TGM016

The stone area which contains the arcade adventure's icons and displays has been extended to reduce the size of the scrolling central action area. Scrolling — still jerky — is fast, so your character goes about his quest at a fair old pace. The graphics are neat and colourful, with reasonable detail — it looks very similar to the Commodore 64 original, and plays just as well.

TGM update 76%

SOFTWARE SNAX

Software Snax is the section for short reviews, the ones that came in too late to fit in the main body of reviews, or which fell in between TGM's schedules. Just because they're here doesn't necessarily mean we think they're rubbish — just check out some on this spread...

NAVY MOVES

Dinamic ■ Amstrad CPC £9.95 cass, £14.95 disk

Two years on and, as its title suggests, the sequel to *Army Moves* is aquatic in nature. Your mission: infiltrate and destroy the enemy U-5544 nuclear submarine.

Beginning in a motor boat, jet-biking commandos are eliminated on the way to the immersion point, where you swim through shark-infested waters, armed with a harpoon. A bathyscape within the enemy base is entered and eels and octopods (plural of octopus y'know) fought past to gain access to the second load — the sub.

Here codes are gained from slain crew members so that the sub's computer can be used — to open up corridors, stop the motors, raise the sub, and send a personal distress signal before the U-5544 submerges — permanently.

Once again, Dinamic's product is saved from terminal mediocrity by a number of distinct game sections. Changing vehicles and scenes prevents boredom and gives more incentive to complete the mission, though in common with other Dinamic games, the difficulty level (perhaps at its highest here) may put some off.

Colourful and lively (but blocky) graphics disguise animation and scrolling which is little substandard, but the gory underwater death sequences are effective. Amongst the middle-of-the-road sound, there are one or two good effects.

Perhaps the best of Dinamic's releases, *Navy Moves* will find favour with many toughened gamesplayers — provided that they don't mind getting their digitised feet wet.

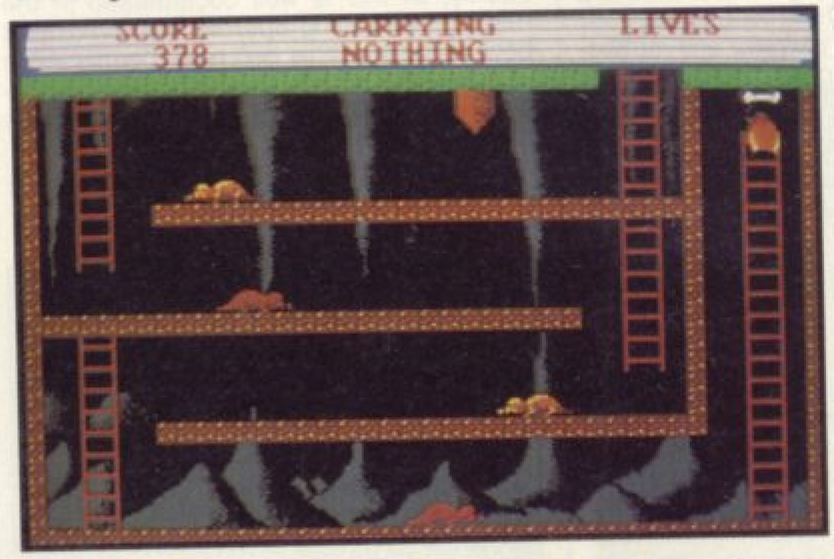
TGM rating 67%



CHUCKIE EGG II

Pick 'n' Choose ■ Atari ST Amiga £19.95

Older gamers may remember a simple platform game called *Chuckie Egg*, from A 'N' F Software; this is its more complex sequel. Now Pick 'N' Choose (abbreviated 'and's go hand-in-hand with *Chuckie Eggs*) have converted it to the 16-bits, giving hero Hen House Harry a new lease of life. Harry has to restore order in a chocolate egg factory gone haywire. After distracting the guard dog, he explores for the objects required: iegg ingredients, toy parts, ladders and tools.



Platforms and ladders may be an aged format, but it's surprising how much interest is generated. Definition is simple, with bigger graphics on the Amiga, and both sprites and backgrounds have good detail — but pixel-perfect jumping is required. Pacey music urges you on, with the Amiga voices predictably more professional sounding. A bit pricey, though, for such a simple game.

TGM rating: Atari ST 60%
Amiga 60%

Burning up the green baize again

STEVE DAVIS WORLD SNOOKER

CDS Software ■ Atari ST £19.99 Amiga £19.99

All forms of green baize, cue and ball action are catered for here, even a short version of snooker with only ten reds. As well as standard 15-red snooker, pool (UK and US versions) and billiards, English and Carom (no pockets on the table) can also be selected from the game menu.

The Options menu selects player mode, demo, or practice (no opposition, balls can be moved freely and shots taken back). The skill level is set between one and six — Novice to Steve Davis.

The power of each shot is metered at the bottom of the screen, spin put on the ball by a cue ball diagram and shot direction set by a line stretching from the cue ball showing its initial direction. Aim is fine-tuned with a handy zoom feature. Good or unusual shots made can be replayed in slow motion — a bit like watching Cliff Thorburn play, really.

The graphics are near-identical on both versions, and like most billiards games (bar those new fangled 3-D ones), the balls and pockets are cleanly defined. The only other necessary visual feature is smooth ball movement and realistic inertia; while things slow down on break-offs and balls occasionally stop with unusual suddeness, *World Snooker* is satisfactory in this area.

Feeble clicks on the ST are replaced by pleasing samples on the Amiga, but both have a few digitised Northern ref phrases.

CDS have been mmin the snooker/pool business since leisure software began, and this latest is a 16-bit conversion of their successful (both at full- and budget-price) *Steve Davis Snooker* of some years back, with the addition of pool and a few useful features. Since 16-bit



(Read in a silly whispering Ted Lowe voice): 'And what a great shot there from the Rotherham lad'... Latest in a long line of green (and blue) baize games from CDS

CHUCK YEAGER'S ADVANCED FLIGHT TRAINER VERSION 2.0

Electronic Arts ■ PC £29.99

Chuck breaks the sound barrier for the second time on the PC in what is effectively an expansion of the existing *Advanced Flight Trainer* program. Four new aircraft have been added to the simulation of flying test aircraft including the Space Shuttle (a novelty addition) and, at last, a properly shaped F-117 Stealth Fighter!

An aerobatic team formation option is also included for those seeking the ultimate in group thrills 20,000 feet up. By far and away a major step above the old Chuck Yeager AFT, the graphics are a lot more professional in presentation and even faster programming techniques have been incorporated.

With the speed, though, comes the inevitable larger steps in frame update, becoming very noticeable in particular on the lower-end PCs. Life is made not only difficult but frustrating as a result, with key repeats an ever present problem.

EGA is, as usual, used to good effect — peripheral screens are excellent, the most notable being a superbly drawn Chuck offering belated advice following a crash. A very welcome feature is the different designs of each cockpit from the threadbare cockpit of a Spad SXIII to the more comfortable surrounds of a Piper Cherokee. A pity most of the fast jets use the same cockpit layout.

Test flights were great fun on the original PC version and this has come across in its entirety in *Version 2.0*. EGA is used to superb effect and the concept of test flights is improved upon with new aircraft, smoother control, more realistic flight performance and slick presentation. Ideally of course, it's best to have a 286 or 386 machine when playing.

When's the *Chuck Yeager Combat Simulator* coming out EA?

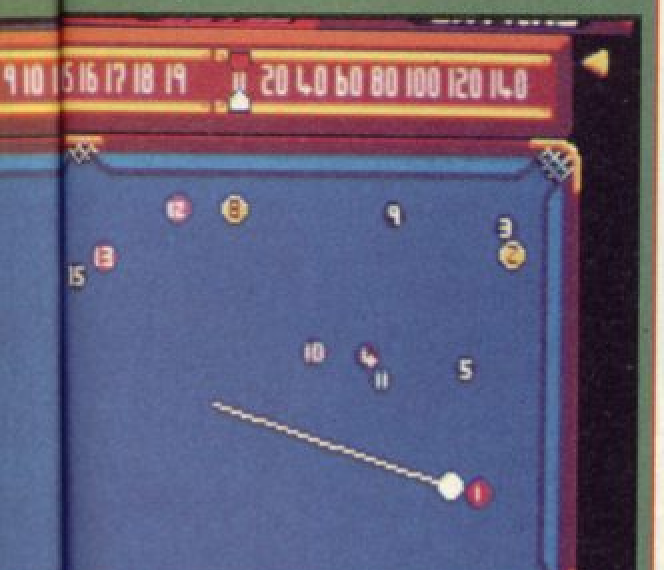
TGM rating 87%





games are in relatively short supply (and this one will eventually be released for the PC), this is a must for mouse-wielding cue freaks.

TGM rating: Atari ST 81%
Amiga 81%



OPERATION NEPTUNE

Infogrames ■ Atari ST £24.95 Amiga £24.95

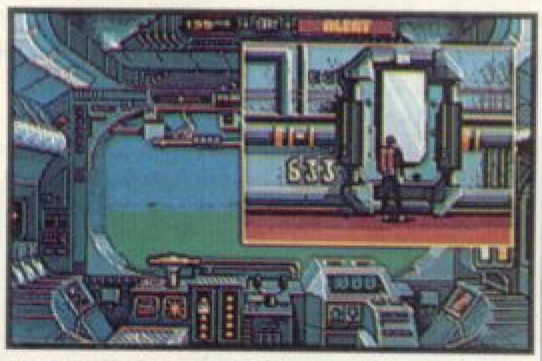
My name's Morane, Bob Morane. I'm a tall, handsome and sickeningly suntanned secret agent and my task is to save the Free World from the psychotic Yellow Shadow. (Don't believe it — his real name is Ming. Doesn't sound so grabbingly evil when you say it that way, does it?).

Ming's building killer robots in interconnected underwater bases. If these are unleashed the world will be at Ming's mercy. That's where I came in — at 6.15pm to be precise, can't remember the day.

I parachuted, complete with a nifty jet bike, into the area of ocean known to house Ming's bases and kicked seven bells out of one of his henchmen. It didn't take long to dispose of him or slide into my super minisubmarine to search the ocean depths and destroy Ming's bases.

EPILOGUE: Operation Neptune is a tough but fairly longwinded arcade puzzle game, with pretty graphics and better than average Jean Michel Jarre-sounding tune. Really only for puzzle game fans.

TGM rating: Atari ST 55%
Amiga 53%



Underwater activity on the ST

BATTLETECH

Infocom ■ AMIGA £24.95

Infocom — famed for complex adventures like the *Zork* trilogy — have turned to graphical roleplaying games with *Battletech*, which concerns your training to become a MechWarrior.

A BattleMech is a huge war robot controlled by a human pilot. Game control is simple. The playing screen is split into three sections: upper-left for printing messages in battle situations and telling you your direction; bottom-left for displaying characters in your group, along with a readout of their physical condition; and the right-hand portion is used to view the surroundings.

Your character, Jason Youngblood, is controlled by moving a pointer around the screen and clicking on the left mouse button. Throughout the game various text descriptions appear followed by a list of options from which you are asked to make a choice. Choose wisely and get plenty of training, because your very own BattleMech awaits your graduation and participation in the coming battle.

The overhead graphics are good, and the animated graphics which appear during battles put you in mind of brilliant Japanese comic book illustrations. With its simple to use control system, high playability and impressive graphics, *Battletech* is a must for all, RPG fans — and probably anyone.

TGM rating 85%





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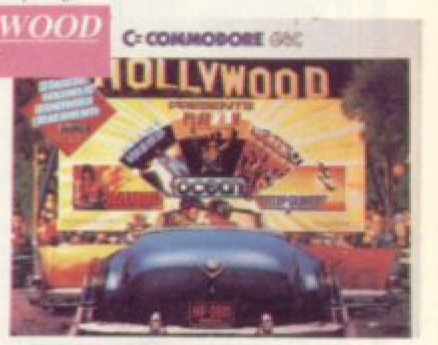


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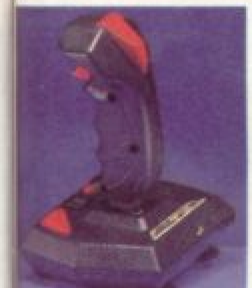
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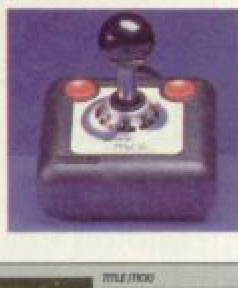
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CONFRONTATION: COIN-OP

This month it's Mark Caswell who takes himself off to enjoy some arcade mayhem with the newest games. But what's this? The first turns out to be for toddlers...

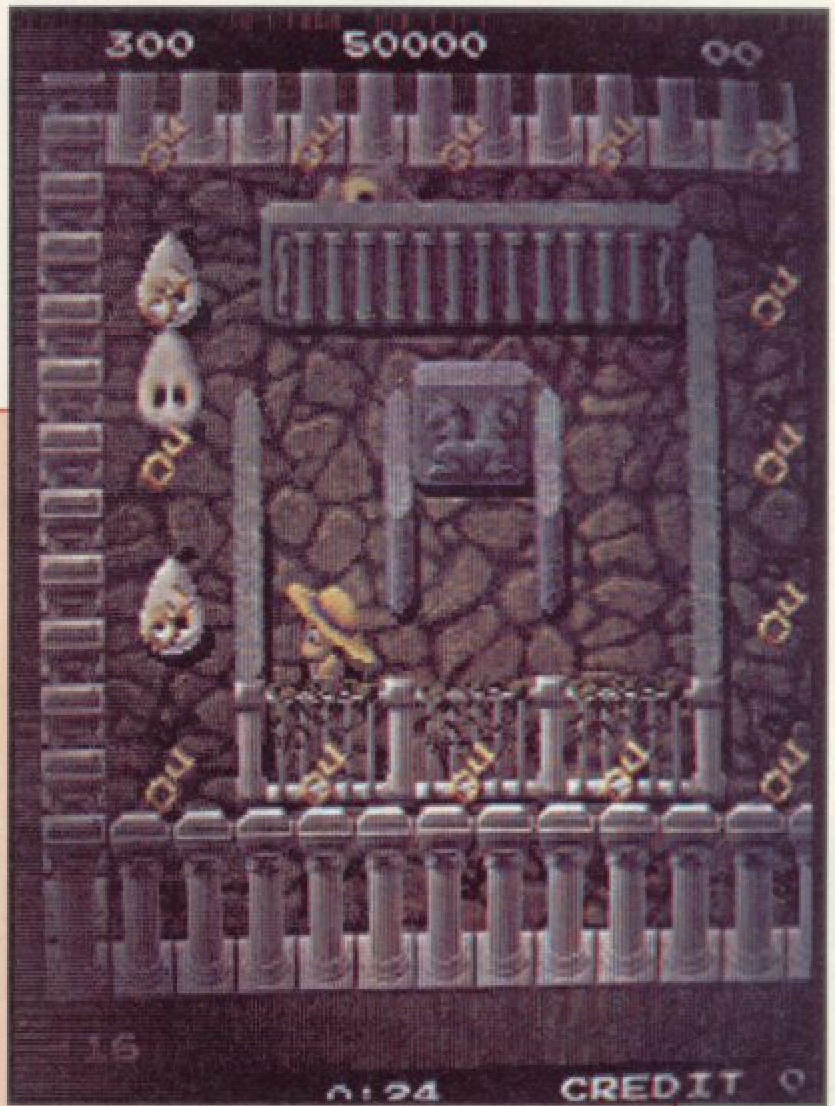
Rompers

Namco

From what I can gather — my Japanese has never been up to much — *Rompers* is your typical girl meets boy, falls in love and gets abducted by a large and ugly monster story. So, jamming your rather-fetching yellow hat further down on your head, you go to battle.

You start by standing in the centre of a *Pac-Man*-style maze, surrounded by walls and proliferating keys — along with a range of attractive enemies. Pear-shaped ghosts wander around the play area and pink hippo-like creatures meander while belching out dense sheets of flame (stand in the way and you get frazzled).

However, Our Hero isn't defenceless, he can shove the walls to squash helpless baddies, and is then clear to pick up the keys and move onto the next screen. It's all clean and cute fun, and a pleasant change from many of the violence-packed games in the arcades recently.



Mechanised Attack



SNK

Clones of *Operation Wolf* or *Thunderbolt* have always abounded, the most recent being SNK's *Mechanised Attack* — which, thankfully, is pretty good.

As usual, you play the part of a mercenary (with the option of a friend) sent to rescue captured fellow spies from the hands of a band of nasty guerillas. You must travel to a remote island and, with the aid of numerous arms, penetrate the enemy's heavily-guarded headquarters.

Grab hold of the cabinet-mounted machine gun and choose which stubbled hero you want to represent you, now board your landing craft ready to storm the beaches. Obstacles between you and dry land include ships, frogmen, helicopters even submarines — all of which do their best to knock your damage meter up.

When landed, the situation doesn't improve; soldiers from bushes and trees blast away with added venom. It's a tough task, so shooting and picking up extra ammo, grenades and other items always helps. There's no doubt that *Mechanised Attack* is another *Operation Wolf*, but those who like a bit of computerised violence are well catered for.

The Final Round

Konami

The Final Round is, despite its title, by no means the definitive boxing game. The aim is to become world champion, so choose a boxer and enter the training camp./

The three attributes to build up are speed, power and stamina, which are increased with the help of weights, punch bag, etc. Once you're fighting fit, it's time for the start of your long haul to the top. An annoying referee drones on about the rules, the seconds are out, and it's Round One.

All the usual boxing moves — defensive and offensive — are available (via three buttons), but watch the power meter at the bottom of the screen: too many hits and you could be down for the count (staying on the



Super Off Road

Leland

Three people can participate in Leland's *Super Off Road*... so it's fun for all the family. After the preliminaries have been sorted out (giving your name, present day, birth date) a visit to Ironman's Speedshop kits you out with a range of goodies like nitro (for extra speed), tyres, shock absorbers, rapid acceleration and a higher top speed. All vary in price, so some can only be collected later on.

As the four pick-up trucks (always a computer opponent) prepare for action, you must expect a track filled with all sorts of dangers: water-filled pits, huge mounds of earth, ramps and many tortuous bends.

Dangerous driving combined with a few nitro boosts soon gets you in the lead (although a quick jab in a friend's ribs also has the same effect). Moneybags as well as nitro can be found on the track, and these top up your flagging reserves. At the end of the day the race will be won by sheer lunatic driving. *Super Off Road* is one of the best multiplayer games I've seen in a while, keep an eye out for it.



It's not all hard driving work in Super Off Road, there are also some sights to be seen!



The Final Round

canvas if your power is low). Win four bouts and you will be allowed to train and build up your strength all over again. The Final Round is nothing out of the ordinary, with some attractive graphics, and didn't thrill me too much.

Turbo Out Run

Sega



Even here, in the deepest recesses of Shropshire, the sequel has arrived. *Turbo Out Run* is a 16-stage Trans-USA race passing through New York, Chicago and Miami, before finishing in Los Angeles. The old Testarossa has been bought by Arthur Daley so jump into your new, gleaming Ferrari F40. Thankfully, Tel didn't get his peepers on your blonde, so grab ahold of her and prepare to race.

As with Atari's Hard Drivin' both a manual and automatic gearbox mode are offered, novice drivers are advised to go for an autoshift. There's also the Turbo Booster of the title, but it's very prone to overheating.

The scenery's different and the car is more of a handful, but basically there's not that much of an improvement over the original.

AND A COUPLE OF QUICKIES...

The action seems to have gone missing in Konami's *Missing in Action*, whichis little more than a very average *Green Beret* clone. Shove in the ten pees and control a mercenary in green combat fatigues at an enemy airbase, slaughtering with a commando knife.
Apart from the soldiers, other obstacles such as mines, guard dogs and airplane propellers really ought to be avoided. And so ought the game.



We covered the new Williams machine *Narc* in the ATEI report, but missed the pic. Here it is: just check out the admirably atmospheric New York subway station scene... and remember kids just say 'no' to drugs.



KICK OFF



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A Soccer Simulator which is not only accurate and realistic but is also great fun to play



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* League competition for 1 to 8 players. Load and Save League facilities.

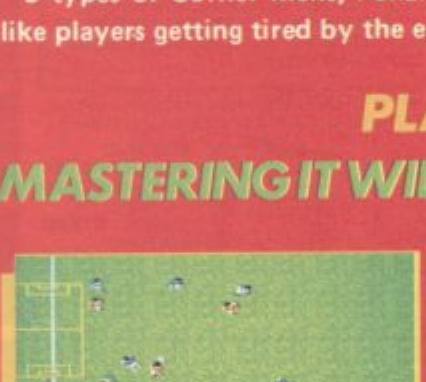
* Simple controls to dribble, shoot, pass, chip or head the ball or do a sliding tackle.

* Amazing ball simulation takes account of the ground and air friction. Direction changing breeze at the higher skill levels

* 9 types of Corner kicks, Penalties, Yellow and Red cards and a host of other features like players getting tired by the end of the game, time wasting, injury time, etc.

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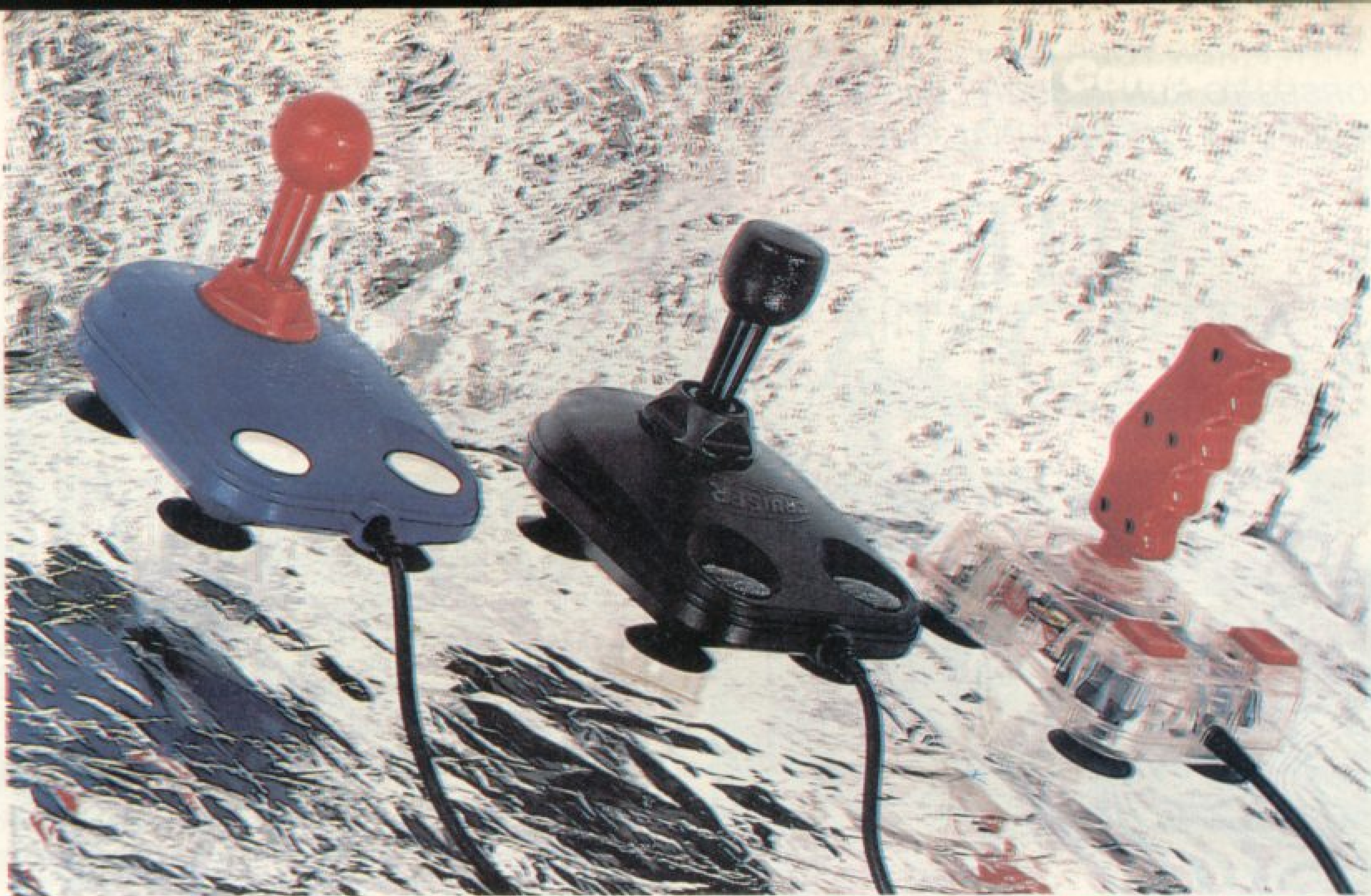


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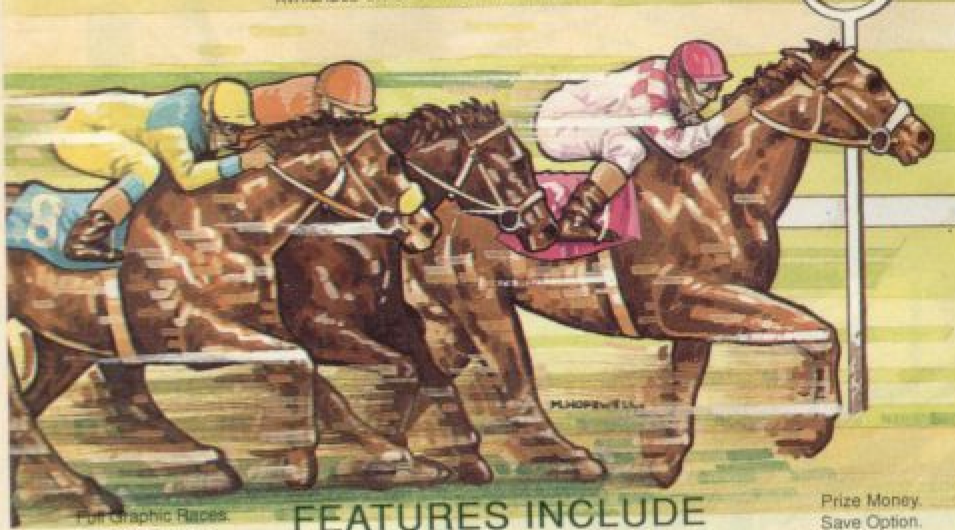
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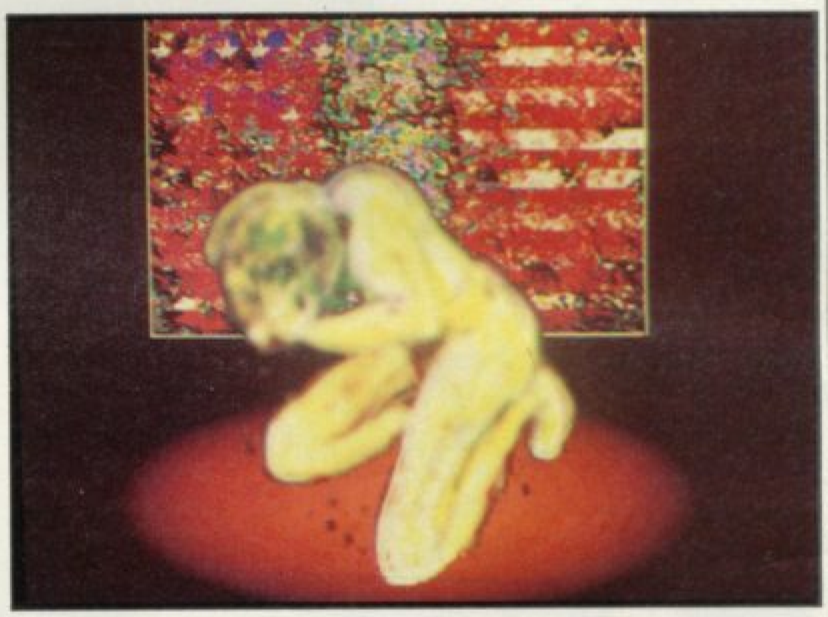
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Simon Gibbs

Images of Power

Let's have more of the art and less of the computers, says Simon Gibbs from Stourbridge — creator of all this month's Gallery pictures.



Simon started using a BBC micro to create designs for ceramics and paintings, and while studying for a fine art degree at Wolverhampton Polytechnic he quickly progressed to a powerful Spaceward Supernova system to produce these screens.



Says Simon: 'The works I produce are a direct coupling of science and art, and what I hope to do in the future is make this connection a lot less obvious. Too much emphasis today is put on the computer as a high-tech advertising tool; this is not its only function and I hope, as someone deeply involved in this area, that through my computer images and video I can begin to show this.'

Clapton 1 (top): The cover artwork of Eric Clapton's August album inspired Simon to create these striking variations. Many of Simon's pictures use psychedelic colours to catch the eye, and in Flag (centre) the figure is clearly overwhelmed by the background flag design. Created back in May 1987, Explosion 4 (above) is reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's action paintings.

In Warhol Grab (right), Simon's portrait of the late New York pop artist Andy Warhol, he uses solarisation techniques to create a striking effect.

Skullwars (below) is drawn using a restricted palette, and demonstrates clearly how symmetry commands can be used to create a pleasing effect.

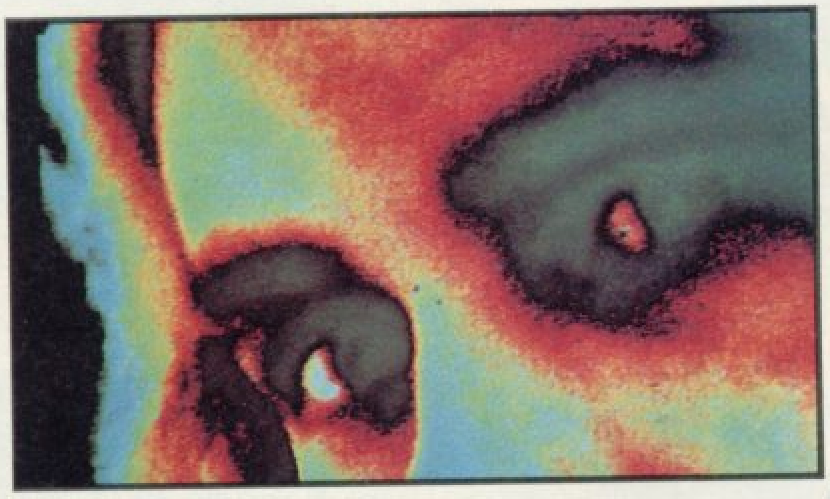






In Marilyn II (above) repeated images, much in the manner of Andy Warhol's own famous montaged prints of the Holywood star, are used to great effect to create a simple but impressive montage.

Recolouring a picture always produces interesting effects, as in Face (left). Here Simon has taken a picture of a face and recoloured it to give it a sinister alien appearance.



Images of Power

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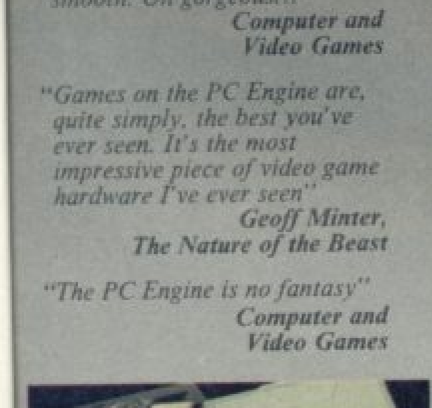
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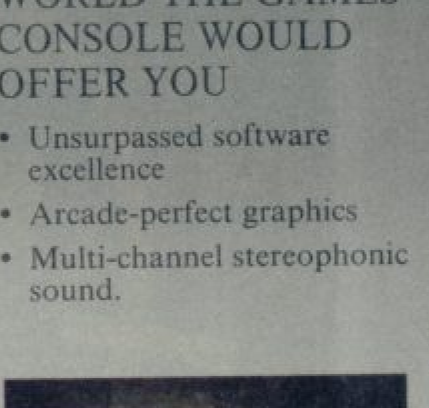
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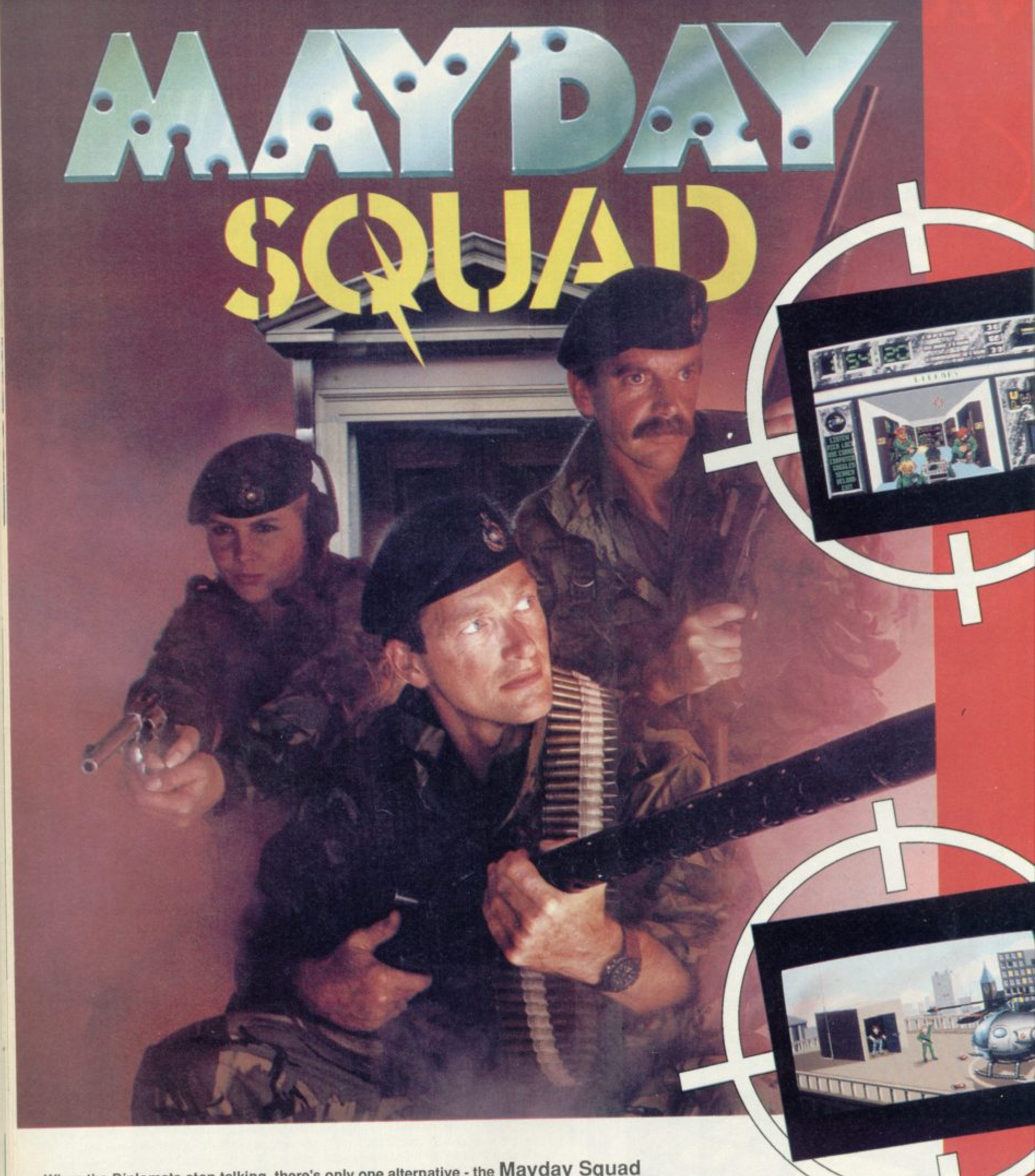


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Robin Candy's PLAYING TIPS

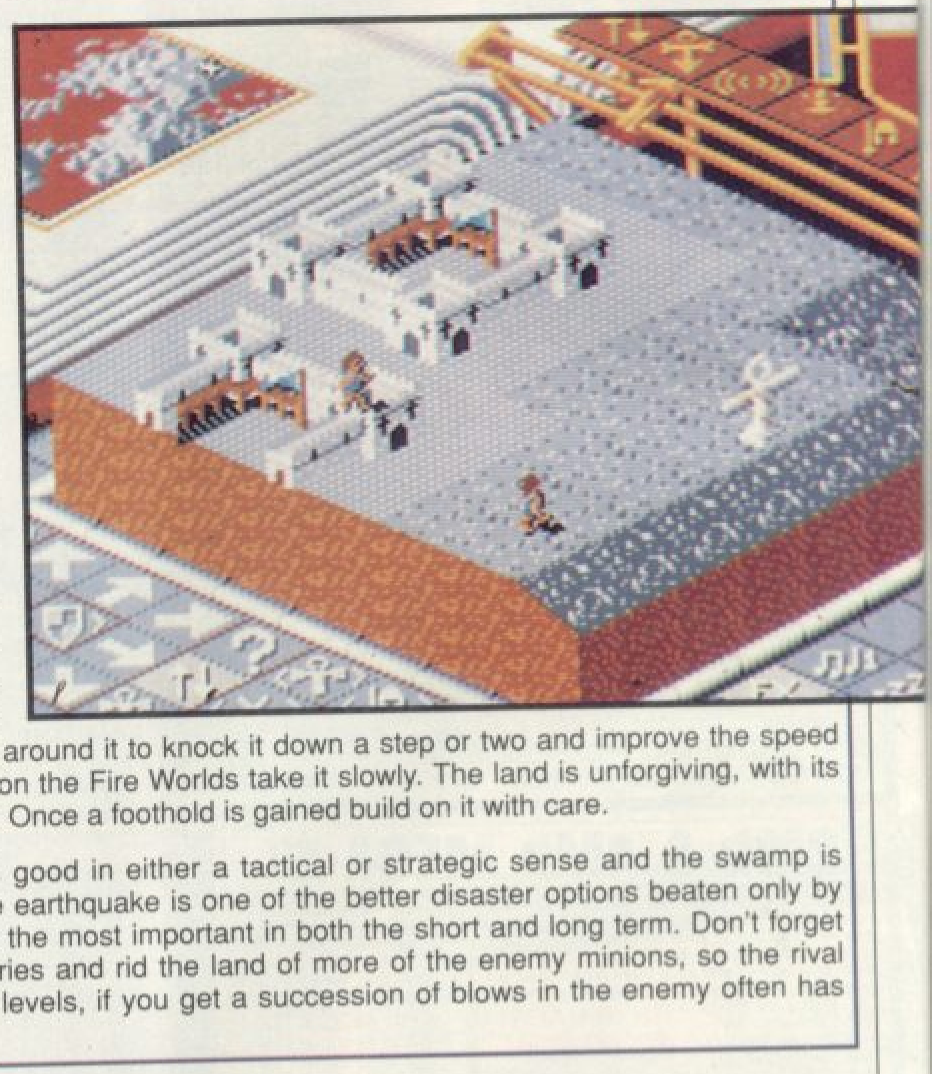
Robin Hogg hands over the reins to ex-CRASH Tipster Robin Candy in the first edition of a new-look Playing Tips column

Back again! It's been quite some time since I've edited a Playing Tips column — but you soon fall back into the habit of sifting through readers' letters rejecting this and editing that. Any Playing Tips column relies heavily on reader input — it just wouldn't be the same without you! I'm looking for tips on the latest and greatest games. It doesn't matter what computer you own — if you've got some useful information to impart then send it to me. Not only will you see your name in print, but you may win the TGM Star Tips £50 software voucher. For my first TGM column I've got some hot tips for *Populous* and *War In Middle Earth* as well as a bumper console special... But enough of the boring waffle, let's get on with the really interesting stuff.

Populous

Ex-tips editor Robin Hogg may be busy writing features on Capcom and arcade games, but he still finds time to play Electronic Arts's fabulous *Populous*. Here are just a few of his findings.

(Atari ST)



■ **Levelling the land** is the key to world domination, but build land high up from the sea. On lower levels just one or two knights are usually enough to rid the land of any enemies. Build a square base around your home and wait for people to expand their lands. Once one or two settlements are up and running, gradually raise the level of the land.

■ **A castle** may be stronger but in the short term it isn't as productive as a couple of small buildings. Don't concentrate all your energy in just one building. If a castle is created in the first few minutes, reduce the land around it to knock it down a step or two and improve the speed of production. When building on the Fire Worlds take it slowly. The land is unforgiving, with its mass of rocks and fiery water. Once a foothold is gained build on it with care.

■ **The Volcano** isn't much good in either a tactical or strategic sense and the swamp is limited in use and range. The earthquake is one of the better disaster options beaten only by the flood. Knights are among the most important in both the short and long term. Don't forget that as you score more victories and rid the land of more of the enemy minions, so the rival God weakens. On the lower levels, if you get a succession of blows in the enemy often has little chance of recovery.



Pipeline

(All formats)

Mat Anthony from Crewe has been playing *Pipeline* intensively for some time now. He's become so good at it that he sent in all the level passwords:

FOLD, TEAR, DUCT, EYES, PEAS, PODS, EGGS.

Sanxion: The Spectrum Remix

The latest Thalamus game (derived from the huge Commodore 64 hit) may not have been out long, but that hasn't prevented **Steve Haw** of Smethwick from discovering this cheat.
Define the keys as **C, H, E, A, T** then enter the password **LYNN** for infinite lives.

Rocket Ranger

(All formats)

Rocket Ranger is one of Cinemaware's best games to date. If you're having problems halting the Nazi war machine just follow these tips from **Stephen Wrench** of Orford.

1. Go straight to the War Room, ignore the Zeppelin for now.
2. Put all your five agents into reserve.
3. Now place your agents in Algeria, Libya, Mideast, Egypt and Russia. This should help contain the Nazis for a while.
4. Now go to the Zeppelin to rescue the Barnstoffs. The first time the Zeppelin appears shoot the missiles. Don't worry about hitting the airship, because it's out of range. The next stage is a bit trickier. If you hit the ship above the gondola it explodes. So aim carefully. When you enter the Zeppelin for the first time use the following replies: Loosen Up Dollface, I Like Your Style, I Oughtta Teach You, I Took The Scenic Route, Can You Use Some Help. The second time you enter the Zeppelin use: I'm Glad To See You Too, I Just Want To Help You, Can You Use Some Help. The third time use: I'd Be Happy To Leave, I Just Want To Help You, Can You Use Some Help.
5. Return to Fort Dix and read the agents' reports. Then get them to organise resistance.
6. Find the Nazi base, because you're going to need the Lunarium later on to get the rocket parts safely back to Fort Dix.



7. If an agent reports the location of a Zeppelin factory or Nazi base go straight there and destroy it to keep Nazi efficiency to a minimum.
8. The first three Nazi guards are easy to beat but as the game progresses they get trickier and trickier to defeat. The best method of ensuring success is to continually use the jab and uppercut. ■

CONSOLES TIPS SPECIAL!

Not surprisingly (software considered), the Sega takes the lion's share of tips — and several are for the Mega Drive — but we've got a few for Nintendo and the PC Engine too...

The Games machine STAR TIPS

Kenseiden

(Sega)

John Eland from Bispham has been busy playing *Kenseiden* and these are his tips on beating those end-of-level warlocks.

1. The Fire Wheel Warlock
Place yourself in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen facing right. The warlock zigzags around the screen, so wait for him to approach you. When he does, jump up and press button 1 to stab him. He pulsates for a short time and then attacks again. Repeat the jumping and stabing actions till he dies. You are then awarded with scroll 1, enabling you to jump higher than normal.

2. The Benkai Warlock
This warlock carries an enormous pole which he isn't afraid to use on your skull. The only way to get close enough to use your sword is to walk right up to him and quickly back off. He tries hitting you with the pole, but if you're quick enough you can dodge his blow and stab him in the chest. Keep doing this till he dies. You are awarded scroll 2, which lets you slash with your sword.

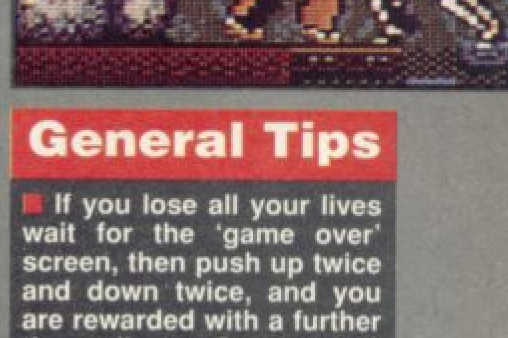
3. The Two-Headed Warlock
Both heads spit fireballs, so stay to the far left of the screen and jump over them. Eventually the fireballs stop and the warlock moves in for the kill. As soon as he does, rush forward and slash at the bottom head with your sword. The head explodes and the top head lowers itself and tries to kill you. Return to the far left of the screen and keep jumping and stabbing. It usually takes about ten hits to kill the second head. You are awarded scroll 3, which gives you the power to split the helmet of foes as well as increasing your attack power by one level.

4. The Putrid Eye Warlock
This is quite a feeble warlock and is easily defeated. It flies around dropping tears on your head. Don't worry if these hit you — the amount of energy they drain is insignificant. Follow it around the screen jumping high and using the helmet-splitting technique (push up and press buttons 1 and 2 simultaneously). Once he's defeated you're awarded scroll 4. You can now attack both forwards and backwards at the same time — this is called cutting the air (push down and press button 1).

5. Death's Head Warlock
This Warlock also floats above your head, so use the helmet-splitting technique to hit it. When the warlock starts to pulsate push down and press button 1. This puts you in the defensive position. The warlock splits into eight parts. If you get into the defensive position quickly enough, these are deflected and reform into the warlock without harming you. When you defeat him you are awarded the Dragon Lord's sword.

6. The Larva Fly Warlock
Position yourself at the far left of the screen facing right. The warlock flies around dropping squat bugs. You jump and stab the warlock and then quickly duck and kill any squat bugs that have been dropped. Repeat this process till the warlock is dead. Remember not to move right otherwise you find yourself overrun by squat bugs. At the end of this level you receive the fifth and final scroll giving you the power to whirl your sword while walking (push the control in any top diagonal).

7. Yonensai: The Master Warlock
This warlock doesn't attack you physically but hurls fireballs from the top of the screen. These bounce around in multiples of four and must be destroyed. Walk to the middle of the screen and duck down. When the fireballs are near you press button 1. You can usually destroy all four with just one stab. There are six sets of fireballs. When they have all been destroyed the master warlock explodes — but the game doesn't end here. The screen clears and a huge man enters. He's armed with an electric bow which fires three arrows at one go. Walk up to him, duck down and wait for him to fire. If you're close enough the arrows miss. Quickly jump up and hit him on the head using the helmet-splitting technique. Then duck down. Repeat this process till the man's killed. The black castle now goes up in flames.



General Tips

■ If you lose all your lives wait for the 'game over' screen, then push up twice and down twice, and you are rewarded with a further three lives. On level 2 climb the Buddha statue. Stand on his head and push up. You appear on a screen containing a gourd life giving you full energy.

PRESS ANY KEY

CONSOLES TIPS SPECIAL!

Altered Beast

(Sega Mega Drive)

TGM's **Robin Hogg** has been playing the Sega MegaDrive nonstop since it arrived in the office. Here are some of his tips for *Altered Beast* and, right next door, *Super Thunder Blade* (sorry, but I can't do his Welsh accent...).

A highly playable game seen at its best in 16-bit

■ Try not to miss out on any of the power-up capsules that come floating from the albino Lascert wolves. Miss one and you have to endure another round of attacks before meeting the sorcerer. The sorcerer only turns nasty when you have changed shape.

The secret continue-plays can be accessed by holding down button A and then pressing START, which takes you back to the beginning of the current level.

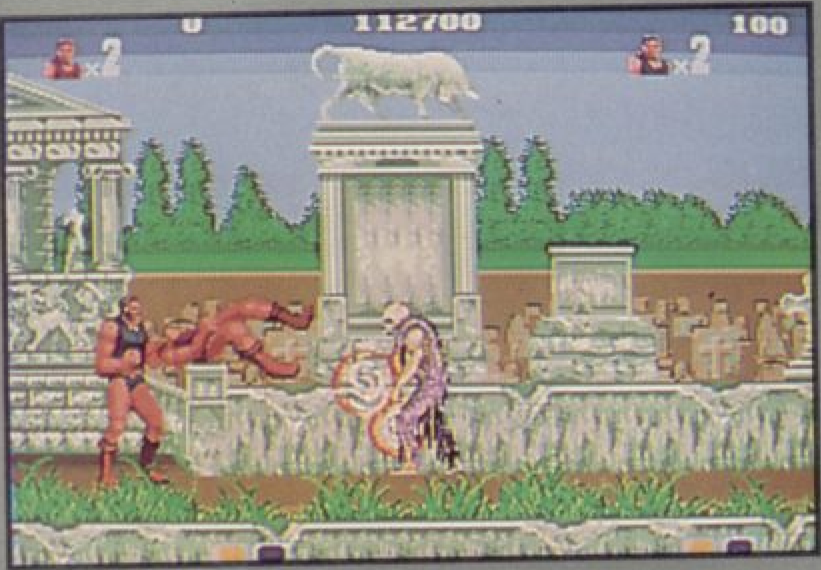
■ Level 1 — Hugger
Rush forward and keep punching the Hugger's body. Use the fire shield movement to destroy falling heads.

■ Level 2 — Octeyes
Go right up to the multieyed monster and use the dragon force field to send it to hell.

■ Level 3 — Mouldy Snail
Punch the snail into a corner to force it so it rears its head. Then leap and roll into its head to drain it of energy. Roll to avoid the vomit.

■ Level 4 — Fatty Crocodile
Best defeated through two-player cooperation. Fire at the lower half of the Croc and use the upward fire shield, then leap to destroy the baby dragons. Try avoiding the flying fireballs and crouch down to avoid low-flying shots.

■ Level 5 — Hell Rhino
Go to the far right, turn and face the Rhino and throw fireballs like mad at him. Don't stop firing or you'll end up trapped in the corner.



Rocky

(Sega)

■ Apollo: stay close to him and keep hitting his head

■ Lang: stay back from him and keep hitting his stomach

■ Drago: stay back from him. Hit him twice in the stomach then once in the head.

Super Thu

(Sega Mega Drive)

At no costs land. Only sitting ducks waste valuable seconds hanging around at ground zero. The chopper normally flies along at top speed and is best suited for getting out of trouble quickly. Anticipate where incoming bullets will impact, and use the throttle control in moderation to dodge them.

Keep moving in large circles around the screen to dodge the



Mike Tyson's Punch Out

(Nintendo)

Pretend you're Frank Bruno and beat the hell out of Mike Tyson. The following code from **Dean Lomax** of Barnsley transports you straight into the ring of the penultimate fight against Super Macho Man. Beat him and you'll find yourself fighting for the world championship against big Mike himself.

■ Type 056 093 6683.

£50 WORTH OF SOFTWARE MUST BE WON!!

■ WE WANT YOUR ALL-FORMAT TIPS! & WE WANT THEM NOW!

TGM is always on the look-out for hints, tips, POKEs and — especially — maps. Each month the best offering will earn £50 worth of software (*your* choice), as well as this spring's essential fashion item — a TGM T-shirt.

We want EXCLUSIVE tips on the LATEST games, so get cracking! Oh, and send them to: Robin Candy's Playing Tips, TGM, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*

Double Dragon

(Sega)

Jason Duncan from Peterhead has this advice on how to beat the baddies.

Always try and get your opponent up against a wall where he stands no chance whatsoever. Just keep punching him until he's dead. The easiest way to kill an opponent is to use flying kicks. To defeat the very last baddie at the end of level 4 you must punch him once at a time and then retreat so that he doesn't have time to hit you back.



nder Blade

flak (especially when faced with the final opponents of each 3-D section).

On the look-down scenes use the throttle control to the full to slowly creep along the mother ship. Take out each gun installation in turn by continually firing and moving into them. Try to rush past the invincible guns encountered on the later behemoths.

On the naval 3-D section just go flat out — DON'T try engaging the battleships. Only losers do that.

On the final level just keep low, skimming as close as you dare under the pipes, but watch out for the three-pipe wall later on. The priority targets in this section are the helicopters. Kill them or you face lots of bullets and severe problems later on in the game.

Shinobi

(Sega)

If those missions are giving you any problems, fret no longer — here's **Matthew Wright** of Belper with some sound advice.

■ **Mission 1 Ken OH**
Go to the far left of the screen and jump twice. Fireballs home in on your movements, but jumping sends them upwards allowing you to run forward and shoot Ken OH in the eyes. Repeat this till he is dead.

■ **Mission 2 Black Turtle**
You should have collected the gun along the way. Shoot the yellow tip at the front of the helicopter several times. Beware of ninja warriors jumping out of the helicopter.

■ **Mission 3 Mandara**
To kill the face on the wall stand halfway across the screen, jump the first fireball and fire your weapon. The second fireball bounces over you. This repeats, so time your shots to hit the face in the eye.

■ **Mission 4 Lobster**
This is probably the easiest level. Simply jump at the man when he lowers his sword and fire at his head. Repeat this several times.

■ **Mission 5 Masked Ninja**
There are four ninjas to defeat. When the fire shield is down shoot the first ninja three times to kill him. When the second ninja attacks, duck down, kick him and advance. Repeat this three times. Shoot the third ninja three times when he's in the air.

Golvellius (Sega)

A nameless reader — he forgot to sign his letter — supplied these codes. Type them in to gain the following:

■ 4 lives, 7 demons to kill: **HPG7, 2ZT4, BUY8, LYTD, MPHO, JT4D, EA77, JQ4U.**

■ 8 lives, 5 demons to kill, the long sword, zest boots and Aruzasu's shield: **RDM5, OD78, U6A7, EZ58, A2YV, DVLH, SRM5, HFMW.**

■ 13 lives, 4 demons to kill, the valley sword, zest boots, ring of invincibility, Aruzasu's shield and Aresta's pendant: **RNW8, L6CF, AOZF, D4A5, HUJQ, 23GP, 2KCH, FK3N.**

■ 15 lives, 3 demons to kill, Aruzasu's shield, ring of invincibility, aqua boots, Aresta's pendant, valley sword, and the purple and green Meas: **4AU6, KFCF, B8FR, TPP5, WZKM, 2DLE, J2GF FJMX.**

■ 17 lives, 2 demons to kill, the legendary sword, Remedia's shield, Aresta's pendant, ring of invincibility, aqua boots, green and purple Meas and ring: **OEL7, C2EZ, YOV2, BEC6, YRN5, CHGN, 26PG, QRZL.**

■ 18 lives, only Golvellius to kill, lengendary sword, Remedia's shield, ascent boots, ring of invincibility, purple mea and mirror: **UPDZ, CPTB, 72CK, XCS2, 3PP3, B7NE, MMNA, MOFS.**

The Ninja

(Sega)

Use these tips to locate the scrolls. **Scroll 1** - found on screen 1. Kill the transforming ninja and the scroll appears. **Scroll 2** - found on screen 4. Shoot the statue of the dog on the far left of the screen five times. **Scroll 3** - found on screen 6. The scroll is next to the tree by the wall near the Samurai House. **Scroll 4** - found on screen 8. Go through the entry way to the open field. Shoot at the last bush towards the back wall and the scroll appears. **Scroll 5** - climb up the rocks. On the right there is a cannon firing rocks. Shoot at this till it stops firing. Now go up the path. Go to the far right and the scroll appears.

Legend Of Zelda

(Nintendo)

Derek Wong of Surrey knows *Legend of Zelda* inside out. Here are some of his findings, but he's not telling how to defeat each of the guardians.

The Overworld is made up of a 16x8 grid and you begin the game at 8E,8S. First off, go and buy the magical shield. This can be found at 14E,5S. Just burn the trees to reveal the shop. Now go to 2E,3S. Go to the third grave in the second row. You should find an entrance under the grave. Go through there and collect the magical sword. Get the letter (it's inside the potion) from the old man at 15E,0S and give it to the old woman at 5E,8S. Something wonderful should happen. Push the left rock at 10E,8S to reveal three short cuts. The power bracelet is hidden under one of the knights at 5E,2S.

Now for the locations of those levels:

■ Level 1 is at 8E,4S; cross the bridge to reach it.
■ Level 2 is at 13E,4S.
■ Level 3 is at 5E,8S.
■ Level 4 is at 6E,5S; use the raft to reach it.
■ Level 5 is at 12E,0S; the only way to get there is to go through the lost maze. Just go north four times to reach the entrance.
■ Level 6 is at 3E,3S.
Level 7 is at 3E,5S; use the whistle.
■ Level 8 is at 14E,7S; burn the lonely tree.
■ Level 9 is at 6E,0S; blow up the left mountain.

R-Type 2 (PC Engine)

Kwong Leung from Loughton sent these codes: hold down the select and run buttons at the same time as you enter the mission code screen. Enter these codes for some super weapons: **HIK 7134 NA or DEA 9275 NA**

Teddy Boy (Sega)

Mitchell Pearce of Southampton can help anyone having problems getting through the levels. On the title screen press up, down, left and right keys. A new screen appeasr. Press up then down nine times. Press button 1 and choose which round to start on.

R-Type (Sega)

Use this cheat from **Daniel Hammond** of Leyton to gain extra credits. On the continue screen move the joypad clockwise. Each time you do this you receive an extra credit up to a maximum of 12. If you move the joypad anticlockwise you enter the sound-test screen where you can listen to all the game's music.

...and back to the main tips section...

Galdregon's Domain

(Atari ST)

To complete the game, follow these tips from **P Kowabnik** of Prestwich.

First explore the surface map and collect the spell book, ring and magic sword from various huts. Go to the Demon's Castle (NE of the castle). Now return to the castle. Go inside then **3N - 9W - 10N**. Go east until you meet the wraiths. Kill the central wraith and get the key. Go east. Unlock the door and kill Lich. Now get the gem.

The rest of the gems can be gathered in any order.

Go to the Labyrinth (this isn't actually on the map but just east of the SW corner). Kill the



Minotaurs till you find the mirror and a key. Find Medusa. Kill her and collect the gem.

Go to the Caves of Doom. Kill the Ogres etc, till you find a diamond. From the entrance go **1N - 2E - 1N - 2E - 1S - 1E - 7N - 6W - 2E - 1S - 2W** to the rock monster. Kill it and get the gem.

Go to the Temple of Set. Go east into the large room and kill the character. Now collect the key and ceremonial dagger. Go down to the catacombs and find the demon of Set. Kill it and collect the gem.

Go to the western Forest on the map. Find the Elf Lord and kill him. Collect the cloak. Now go to the forest at the southeast of the map. Go **4W - 3N - 11W - 1S - 2E - 2S - 3W - 4N - 14E - 1S - 1W - 1E** to the Assassin Leader. Kill him and get the gem. Now return to the King. ■

PRESS ANY KEY

War In Middle Earth

(Atari ST, Amiga, PC)

It's a shame that the 8-bit versions of the latest Tolkien game from Melbourne House were so disappointing, especially when compared to the 16-bit epics. **David Ho** of Canterbury and **Damian Miles** of Chesterfield were among the first TGM readers to complete the game. Get Frodo to Mt Doom and save Middle Earth from the clutches of Sauron with these tips.

■ While it's possible to get the ring to Mt Doom without mobilising armies, it is a precarious strategy which can easily fail. At the start of the game Eomer and Faramir are already allied to the fellowhip. Other forces will not join the fellowship unless they are given some token of your goodwill or are attacked by Sauron's or Sauruman's hordes, by which time it may be to late.

Early on in the game decide who's going to look for what and divide your forces accordingly. Take the Sceptre of Annuminas to Gondor to recruit Denethor and his troops. Take the Dwarven Ring to Dain in Erebor to recruit the dwarves. Take the Red Arrow to Edoras to mobilise Theoden and the Rohirrm, and take the Silver Orb to Thranduil's Palace to mobilise the Sylvan Elves.

It's a good idea to send Frodo to Bree to join up with Aragorn and then to just east of the Last Bridge to meet Glorfindel. Send this trio to Rivendell. At Rivendell you are joined by Boromir, Legolas, Gimli and Gandalf. When you arrive at Rivendell your forces are given two months' rest, and any units that you have given orders to will have reached their destinations.

There are five main strongholds to protect: Minas Tirith, Edoras, The Hornberg, Lorien and Thranduil's Palace. If three of these should fall you automatically lose the game. Sauruman mobilises his forces first and attacks the Hornberg. You should send all the Rohirrm there in anticipation of this, where they should make short work of Sauruman's Orcs.

Minas Tirith is at most risk from Sauron. Send all the Gondor units there as well as any surviving Rohirrm. Leave 1,000 Sylvan elves at Thranduil's Palace ready for the Easterlings' attack, and leave all Lorien's elves at Lorien ready for the Orcs of Dol Guldor. Send all the remaining armies including the dwarves, Frodo etc to Minas Tirith.

All being well, Sauron's first wave of attack should be defeated (watch out for the trolls — 500 of them can massacre as many as 5,000 infantry). When being attacked always charge. Once Sauron has been defeated, move the fellowship into Mordor (over the mountains is the best route) and then onto Mt Doom to complete the game.

■ Locations of objects

Sceptre of Annuminas (**B3**) On the beach west of Annuminas
Dwarven Ring (**D6**) North of Dol Guldur
Mithril Mail (**C2**) Belegost
Blue Healing Potion (**C3**) North of the White Towers
Palantir (**C2**) South of Forland
Blue Healing Potion (**C3**) Michel Delving
Blue Healing Potion (**C2**) The Grey Havens
Dwarven Hammer (**B7**) North of Erebor
The Red Arrow, Mithril Mail and Black Flask (**B5**) South of Mt Gram
Elven Blade (**C4**) Tom Bombadil's house
Mithril Mail (**C5**) Rivendell
Black Flask (**C3**) Tuckburrow
Rope, Elven Cloak, and Glowing Cordial (**C5**) Lorien
Ancient Sword (**E5**) Banks of the River Isen
Silver Orb (**A5**) South of Mt Gungabad ■

Wizball

(PC)

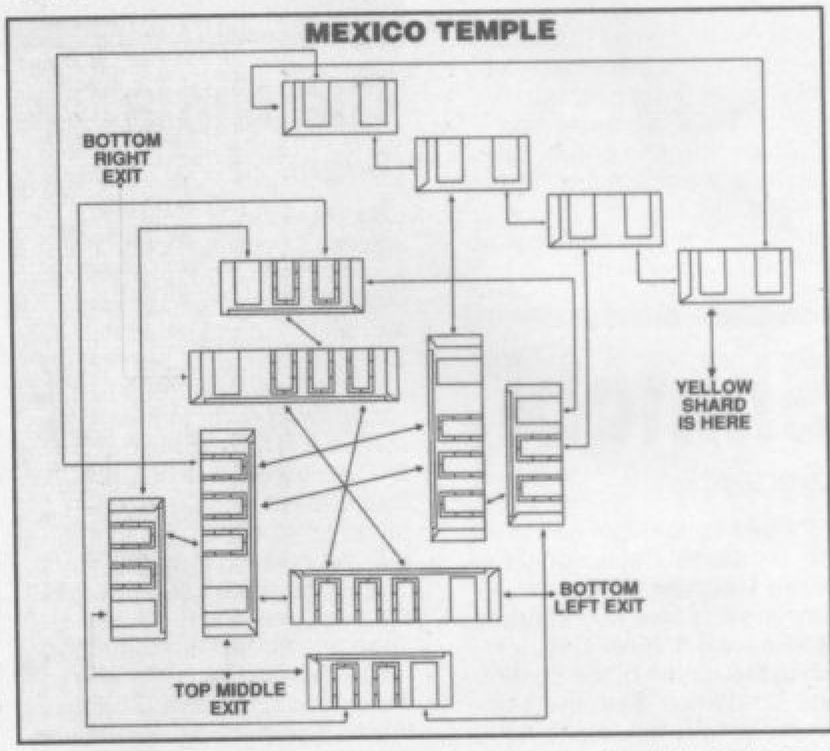


Although Wizball has been around for quite some time now it's still one of the most original games available. **Myo Tun Oo**, who hails from Kuala Lumpur has discovered this extra-lives cheat for PC owners. First collect all the paint on the existing level. Once the paint pots are full, a bonus screen appears. Shoot all the enemies till two Wizballs appear, then shoot one for an extra life. Do not shoot the other but move left till you hear a strange noise. Now six Wizballs appear on screen. Shoot five for five extra lives and then move left again till you hear the strange noise. Another six Wizballs appear; once again shoot five, then move left. Repeat this procedure to get the desired number of lives.

Zak McKraken

Following on from last month's tips here is the latest instalment in *Zak McKraken*'s solution.

Use the reservations terminal and buy a ticket to Mexico. Walk to the plane. Walk through the automatic doors, then through the jungle. Eventually you find a clearing with three temple entrances. Go through any door. Use the Mexico Temple Map to find your way around. Go to the room marked 'Crystal Shard' (use the WHAT IS command to find and light the torches). Switch to Leslie.



You are taken to Mars where Melissa and Leslie are awaiting your commands. Open the space ship door and get in. Open the glove compartment and get the fuse and cashcards. Use the oxygen valve. Pick up the Digital Audio Tape (DAT) and go back outside. Give Melissa her cashcard.

Switch to Melissa. Get inside the space ship and close the door. Use the oxygen valve. Take off the helmet and switch to Leslie.

Walk left to the monolith. Use the cashcard on the slot and wait for the token to drop. Go right to the building and through the door. Use the token on the metal plate. Pick up the burnt fuse and use the fuse in the fusebox. Close the fusebox. Close mars door, then open the hostel door. Go inside the hostel. Open the right-hand locker, pick up the vinyl tape and the flashlight. Walk to the bunk and pull back the covers. When she calms down a bit pick up the broom alien. Walk to the right and pick up the ladder. Go back out through the door. Now open the Mars door and go outside. Use the broom alien on the sand outside the hostel. Walk right to the huge face.

Use the ladder on the door. Push the buttons in the same order as you saw in the village in Kinshasa (remember last month's tips). The door opens. Pick up the ladder and walk to the great chamber. Go right till you find the second huge statue. Read the strange markings and note them down (call this diagram 1). swtich back to Zak. Use the yellow crayon on the statue's strange markings.Draw diagram 1. On finishing, click on 'Finshed Drawing'. Pick up the shard. Go out the door. Find your way out of the temple using the map. Make your way back through the jungle to the airport and use the reservations terminal to buy a ticket to London. Walk to the plane. Walk through the automatic doors and give Annie the scroll, flagpole, whiskey, wire cutters and both crystal shards. Switch to Annie.

Give the whiskey to the sentry. Turn off the switch and use the wire cutters on the fence. Walk to Stone Henge and use both bits of the crystal shard on the altar stone. Now read the scroll. Both bits of shard will be fused together to form a yellow crystal. Pick up the crystal and walk to the guard house Give the yellow crystal to Zak. Switch to Zak.

Walk to the airport and buy a ticket to Miami. Walk to the plane. Buy a ticket to the Bermuda Triangle. Walk to the plane. ■

That's it for the first instalment of the new-look playing tips. Each month the best tip I receive will earn its sender £50 worth of software of their own choice, as well as an essential TGM T-shirt. Send tips, POKEs, maps and hints to: Robin Candy's Playing Tips, TGM, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*



NOW LISTEN HERE!

WIN a Master Sound sampler PLUS a Sharp tape deck from SOFTWARE HORIZONS

How many times have you listened to a record and thought 'that bit's not right' or 'they should put a few more snare drums in that bar' and longed to put your musical ideas into practice? Well, now you can — thanks to Software Horizons and their wonderful Master Sound sampler, which receives a rave review in this month's Back Bytes section.

For Software Horizons are offering the winner of this comp a Master Sound sampler, plus a £50 Sharp stereo radio cassette recorder with three-band graphic equaliser — and ten runners-up will receive Master Sound samplers too. (Sadly, the sampler will only work with STs — but the Sharp stereo is guaranteed compatible with all major songs.)

Just answer the following questions correctly and send your entry on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope: **I Want To Be A Mixmaster Comp, TGM, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*,** to arrive no later than June 22. Usual rules apply (that's why they're usual).

1 Paul Hardcastle had a number one hit with 19, which made extensive use of samplers. What was the song about?
a) The Vietnam war
b) A girls' magazine
c) Leaving college

2 What is quantization?
a) A facility found on sequencers to correct timing errors in music
b) A hissing sound
c) A process where the pitch of a sound is raised or lowered

3 Holly Johnson is currently riding high in the singles and album charts. He used to be the lead singer of Frankie Goes To Hollywood. Who produced Frankie's records?
a) Stock, Aitken and Waterman
b) Trevor Horn and Stephen Lipson
c) Stephen Hague

4 A Fairlight is a super synthesizer/sampler commonly used in recording studios — but it's also the name of a computer game. Who released the game in 1985?
a) US Gold
b) Hewson
c) The Edge

COMPETITION RESULTS...

LINEL IN THE RED CORNER COMP
Issue 17
Winner: David Barter of Wiltshire SN15 4QG. **Runners-up:** Nigel Parsons, Cardiff CF5 1QR. Dean Betts, Kent TN8 0BN. D Tattersall, Barnsley S70 3EP. J Chiverton, Bracknell RG12 3HT. Steve Bean, Poole BH15 2ED. J Harvey, Derby DE7 3EF. Martin Owen, Gwynedd LL55 2LR. R Benge, Eastbourne BN23 8BH. Stephen Dawkins, Leicestershire LE15 9RR. Colm Andrew, Cheshire.

AM I LUDICRUS OR DID I WIN? COMP
sponsored by CRL, Issue 17
Winner: Howard Thorpe, Southampton SO1 8AX. **Runners-up:** David J Williams, Carmarthen SA33 6DR. James O'Driscoll, Worcester WR3 7LG. D Stanford, Tayside KY13 7BY. William Callaghan, Tipton DY4 8AS. Steve Bean, Poole BH15 2ED. K A Siddiqui, Chiswick W4 5DH. Simon Wiles, Denmead PO7 6PR. Steven Neill, Bath. Jamie Reggel, Leicester LE2 3TH. Marco Ciglia, Battersea SW11 2JR.

MAYHEM WITH THE PC ENGINE COMP
sponsored by Micromedia, Issue 17
Winner: Ben Cahill, Staffordshire ST18 0SG. And the Japanese Bokken sword goes to Geoff Sturgess, Hants SO5 6EQ.

POPULOUS HOTLINE COMP
sponsored by Electronic Arts, Issue 17
Winner: Mark Watkins, Bucks HP7 9BB.
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WEC LE MANS HOTLINE COMP
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A REAL BLAST WITH IMAGEWORKS
Issue 16
Winner: Ernest Nelson, Larne BT40 1TE.
Runners-up: Stephen Webley, Chilton Polden TA7 9DW. Piers Foot, Keyworth NG12 5BQ. Paul Taylor, Oakham LE15 7AU. S N Preene, Brierley Hill DY5 4JG. Sean Glover, Thorney PE6 0TJ.
2nd Rinners-up: Robert Aitken, Coventry CV3 6JU. John Edgar, Durham DH7 9NP. Paul Chan, Halifax HX4 9HW. Simon Wiles, Denmead PO7 6PR. Marcello Bortolino, London N16 5BG.
Imageworks T-shirt winners: Tony Butler, Kent ME10 3LR. Neil Skinner, Sheffield S11 9HW. Duncan Stewart, Winscombe BS25 1BJ. Andrew Noah, Blackpool FY6 8BN. Jeremy Small, Letchworth SG6 3HY. ■

F-117A AGGRESSOR CONFESSIONS

Last month TGM revealed the first screens from Argonaut's F-117A Aggressor sim — but in this instalment of the team's byte-by-byte account, programmer Ian Crowther recalls the cockups they endured in giving those grafix some gameplay.



"It looks like it's going to be a real pain in the fingers to program"

I only joined the team at Argonaut a few months ago, with little knowledge of 16-bit programming. The first project I was given was to write the high-score table for Afterburner — not a great task in itself, but as the first nontrivial piece of 68000 code I'd ever written it wasn't easy. Eventually, and with considerable help, I got it working, about four hours before the deadline for duplication.

As soon as my code had been converted and smoothed out for the Amiga version, Jez San (in his infinite wisdom) put me to work on F-117A Aggressor, and after much muttering and thinking of thoughts he dropped the WIMP system and the mission-handler in my lap.

The mission-handler was going to have to be an incredibly clever piece of code, and it didn't look like an easy thing to write. So, lazy as ever, I started on the WIMP system. Digging through the pile of junk that infests my desk, I eventually unearthed the spec for the system — buttons, requesters, menus and a redefinable mouse pointer were all listed among the requirements.

It was beginning to look like a complete intuition clone was required, and all to fit inside a few K so as not to cramp the 'important' code.

'No worries,' said I, and I set to work writing bottom-level routines out of which I'd eventually build all the useful bits, and for a few days all was fine: things were even starting to work! Then I got stuck. I needed a superfast way of drawing those little square boxes that all you Workbench users out there know and love.

Aha! The blitter, that wonderful piece of hardware ready at my every call. I started reading the manuals and discovered that it's an ungrateful piece of cursed silicon designed to thwart any but the most stubborn programmer. It finally took three of us (Giles Goddard, Richard Clucas and me) a day and a half to tame the beastie and then... bliss! Requesters requesting things, areas being recognised and even a menu bar at the top!

Then the bane of every programmer's life struck — the spec was expanded. Arrrrgh!. We now had to include a text-input device, and make the requesters movable.

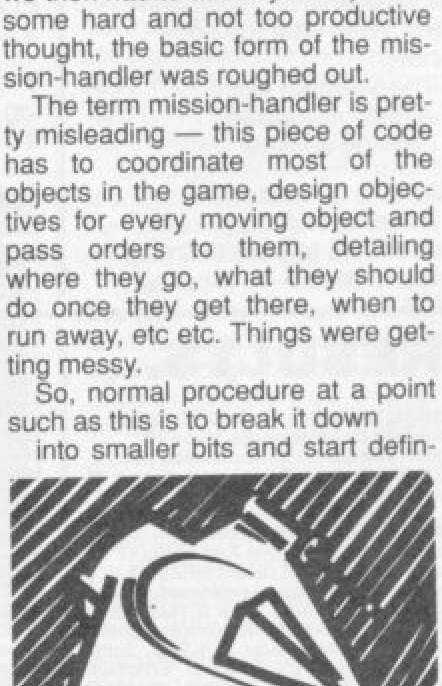
A couple of days and a few routines later the requesters were doing just that, moving around and glitching all over the place, but when Chris Humphries rewrote his text routine to cope with text at other than word boundaries things worked smoothly again With the main things done it was time to clean up the code and attend to all those little bugs that you 'know what it is' and will 'get round to later'. Most were simple little things — changing the order in which routines were called, remembering to stack a register that got trashed etc.

Misleading handler

Now came the time to start thinking about the mission-handler: some serious thinking, and then a bit more thinking. We were starting from scratch on this, with no useful pieces of paper to tell us what was required (and what was worse, even once we'd decided what to do we then had to actually do it!). After some hard and not too productive thought, the basic form of the mission-handler was roughed out.

The term mission-handler is pretty misleading — this piece of code has to coordinate most of the objects in the game, design objectives for every moving object and pass orders to them, detailing where they go, what they should do once they get there, when to run away, etc etc. Things were getting messy.

So, normal procedure at a point such as this is to break it down into smaller bits and start defining them. After even more thought and a few scribbles (and swearing) we got something down on paper that seemed to cover most ideas involved. Then came the hard bit, actually coding it up (cue more swearing).



I started on what I thought would be a relatively easy piece, one that could work out a route from A to B avoiding all enemy radar bases along the way. I was wrong (yet more swearing) — it wasn't even vaguely easy. This kind of thinking would be simple enough for a person, but for the computer to do the same thing took some horrible maths which I eventually got working (in BASIC), with help from Danny Emmett who supplied me with some of the more useful equations.

After steaming my brain over nasty sums for a week or so I decided something a little less strenuous was in order, so I started cataloguing all the missiles, bombs, fuel tanks and electronic warfare devices carried by each of the planes on the annoyingly large list of aircraft available to the player. This done, I started working on the small section of the user interface that deals with loading these items onto the plane before a mission. The screen is to be split into two sections, one with an image of the player's chosen plane and all its ordnance rotatable in 3-D, and the other section having the available items displayed as sprites.

This presented a few problems, such as keeping the rest of the game running while the player is in the hangar. Fortunately none were insurmountable, and it was not long before loading a plane with 'bomb type 1' or even 'missile' was available to all comers.

Stacked and loaded

Once that was working, the daunting task of converting all my nasty sums into code came into view — not actually difficult in itself, but coping with things such as trying to multiply two long words together and square-rooting the result (Pythagoras never had to do that in binary) isn't much fun, and the custom stack that we need to make the recursion in the routine really makes the brain ache...

Fortunately, the weapon-loading routines didn't quite work and I had to go back to them. Things needed changing: I hadn't done the bit to give the loaded weapons to the rest of the game (oops) and even as I write this there are bits that still don't work (swearing...). But the

OF A CODER

problems were mostly just little twiddly bits like making sure I ask for data blocks nicely rather than just sneaking them out from under another object, and recludging the scaling on the missiles so they actually fit all planes.

Chris and I then merged our versions and spent a happy morning beating to death all the bugs that arose from this ill-advised action. Paul, meanwhile, was writing a map editor (to edit maps, what else...) and in between steaming my brain over sums that were bad for my health, I gave him a hand with converting map scales into numbers that the (merely) human brain can cope with (ie 536,870,912 becomes simply 2^{29}). We also invented the 'EEC standard kilometre', which consists of 1,024 metres with 128 centimetres each (no prizes for guessing why).

Offensive/defensive

During all this time, thoughts on the mission-handler were not altogether halted, and the spec was gradually refined into something that not only made a little sense but just might be possible to program. At last I had some more pieces of paper that actually told me what was required.

Every so often new objects would have to be generated and objectives given to them; these would have to make good sense, as giving a tank a formation of aircraft as a target would make things a little strange. So each object would be assessed for offensive and defensive capability, and assigned a suitable target. Individual object strategies take over at this point, and cope with things like getting the objects to the coordinates given them.

This necessitated the formulation of a new data structure, the 'order block', which could be passed from object to object, detailing the actions to be taken and things like what priority the orders have. For instance, a 'scramble to intercept' would override a standing patrol order, and in some cases even divert planes away from their targets to defend friendly territory.

Easy to understand in principle... but it looks like it's going to be a real pain in the fingers to program.

"This kind of thinking would be simple enough for a person, but for the computer to do the same thing took some horrible maths"

The more the merrier

F-117A Aggressor looks set to break all flight-sim records — with more planes than Heathrow on a busy summer's day. Running through the list, Ian Crowther counts '26... no, 27 for definite... possibilities on another 12... or possibly more'.

Sounds like Electronic Arts should bundle an air-traffic control simulator too...



The professional

Argonaut's F-117A Aggressor may herald a revolution in solid 3-D, but for 19-year-old programmer Ian Crowther it means something even more momentous: 'This is the first time I've actually got paid for doing this, though I've been programming from a long time ago!'

And though there were only a few years between Crowther's first programming experience at school and his initiation into Jez San's high-tech coding team, they must seem universes apart. His first micro acquaintances were ZX81s and TRS-80s at school; then 'gradually they got BBCs and I got my hands on a second-hand one, which I still have'.

The BBC may be a faithful friend for life, but as Crowther learned machine code he soon wanted a more powerful machine. It arrived in the shape of an Amiga — but no games yet, for Crowther had found a vaguely computer-related job at British Aerospace. Grandly titled a Production Progress Assistant, but essentially working in stock control, he continued coding in his spare time.

Perhaps one day the rest will be history, if Ian Crowther becomes as famous a games man as his namesake Tony (Zig Zag): but now there's no time to rest on laurels, for he's busy with Aggressor, 'putting the final polish on the weapon-loading, bits and bobs here and there'.

'It's troublesome in places,' acknowledges Crowther — but he hopes to stay at Argonaut after the project's finished. A hard act to follow? We'll keep you informed.

A game by any other name

Question: Why is F-117A Aggressor like Activision?

Answer: It keeps on changing its name.

When you first read about the Argonaut blockbuster back in TGM015, it was simply called X. But meanwhile, Jez San and his men were privately calling the game Hawk. And it wasn't till last issue (TGM018) that Electronic Arts settled on F-117A Aggressor.

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And, as the old saying goes: smile and dial . . .

Home, sweet home

EARTH/CYBERTECH SOURCEBOOK

RolePlaying supplement for 2300 AD
Published by Games Designers Workshop

There's no place like home... Yet, strangely, home — Earth, mother planet of humanity — has been until now the most poorly-covered planet of all the dozens of human-inhabited worlds in GDW's *2300 AD* RPG. Now at last GDW have put that right with the release of the *Earth/Cybertech Sourcebook*, bringing players and referees from the hostile reaches of the final frontier to adventure on Earth at the dawn of the 24th century.

And Earth holds every bit as much excitement and danger for the intrepid adventurer as any colony world, from the space city of Gateway atop its 24,000-mile tower, to the shady alleys of the terrestrial metropolises and the unreal world of the Cyberspace matrix...

Two-thirds of the supplement is an overview of the politics and economics of the future Earth, starting with information about Orbital Quarantine Command — the huge net of warships which seals the planet from contamination by some alien plague organism. Earth visitors go through extensive quarantine procedures which are carried out at Gateway, a huge space station in geostationary orbit, for plans are given.

From Gateway the Earthward journey continues on the Beanstalk, a miraculous 'railway into space' connecting Gateway to its ground station, from where players players are whisked to any Earth nation in a matter of hours — and the supplement gives the referee an outline of what might await them wherever they go.

The descriptions of the nations are bare and factual, typically less than a page each, although major nations have more extensive sections. The recent history and current economic and political situation of each country are detailed, along with a description of the nature of its society. There isn't enough detail here to provide more than the barest taste of each setting, but that's all that's needed for a supplement of this type — providing a sound base for the referee to build on.

This is made easier because Earth has changed less than might be expected in 300 years, due to the slow recovery from the devastation of the Twilight War. America, for instance, suffered severely and is no longer a superpower, but its geography remains virtually unchanged.

The supplement's most exciting part — the Cybertech section — is saved till last. Cyberpunk roleplaying is here! (Those unfamiliar with Cyberpunk should jack out now, watch *Blade Runner*, read *Neuromancer* and buy all the back issues of TGM...).

The section opens with an introduction explaining Cyberpunk culture, and suggests some examples of the types of character who might feature in a Cyberpunk adventure, such as Bionic Warriors — 24th-century ninjas who serve as mercenaries, assassins or bodyguards with surgical and mechanical enhancements to their bodies which make them lethal killing machines — and Technological Scavengers — the hackers or 'desk jockeys' who earn a perilous living playing the pathways of the Cyberspace matrix.



Mexicans get by selling cheap software

A section devoted to Cyberspace explains the workings of this huge computer network with its simulated alternate reality, detailing rules for cyberspace combat between desk jockeys and the sophisticated and deadly security programs that guard secret data.

Another chapter details the range of bionic enhancements available to those who can afford them, including illegal subdermal weapons (such as the deadly monofilament garotte) and bionic eyes, vastly superior to the natural item. The booklet concludes with a Cyberpunk-style adventure set in New York.

Like most of the *2300 AD* add-ons, this supplement's emphasis is on ideas for referees to develop further rather than instant action-packed material. The Cyberpunk section is only 14 pages and really forms just an introduction to a topic I hope we'll see GDW take further. But there's plenty here to keep players happy, and with a little referee work and some judicious borrowing from book and film sources, it should provide dozens of adventures for any group, with the Cyberpunk rules adding quite literally a new dimension to roleplaying!

Strongly recommended.

WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY

Games Workshop ■ Softback edition 366 pages £9.99
Roleplaying rulebook



With a drop in price (and bulk), the repackaging changes are only cosmetic, but I do greatly prefer the new printing — the older hardback edition is satisfyingly sturdy, but its presentation was spoiled by cheap and nasty paper. The new printing is on crisp, shiny paper which should serve to keep Chaos at bay a little longer!

I reviewed the original version way back in the mists of time, but the rerelease merits another mention.

The contents are unchanged, with eight comprehensive chapters presenting the rules for character generation, combat, magic and so on, and providing background material.

The game is set in the 'Old World', a fantasy continent cleverly modelled on Europe. This setting is the best part of the game for me — players can instantly relate to the atmosphere of the part of the world they are in, and referees can borrow place-names, geography and culture straight from reality, while the fantasy element is blended in very well so that dwarves, elves, monsters and magic don't seem at all out of place. The atmosphere is enhanced by hundreds of black and white sketches throughout the text and colour plates, and the overall presentation is pretty good, with most of the important charts and stables reproduced in a reference section at the back.

The rules system is on the whole fairly simple. Combat and magic systems have a similar feel to TSR's classic *Dungeons And Dragons*, with the addition of an elementary skill system. Character advancement is by means of a 'career' system — a player chooses a career, such as seaman, bodyguard or merchant, which then allows his character to improve particular characteristics. The actual improvements are bought from those possible using experience points awarded by the referee to successful adventurers. The career system is a nice idea in principle and works well for generating starting characters, but it quickly becomes unrealistic later on — 'Hmm, I need to improve my weapons skill... I know, I'll become a sea captain!'

For many, the biggest advantage is its compatibility with the excellent Warhammer Fantasy Battle miniatures wargaming rules, and if you want to combine fantasy roleplay with tabletop, this is probably the system for you. Otherwise this is a welcome repackaging of a simple fantasy RPG offering everything in one book. There are a few shortcomings which mean it won't be everyone's cup of troll stew, but it's excellent value for money and should appeal to roleplaying newcomers in particular.

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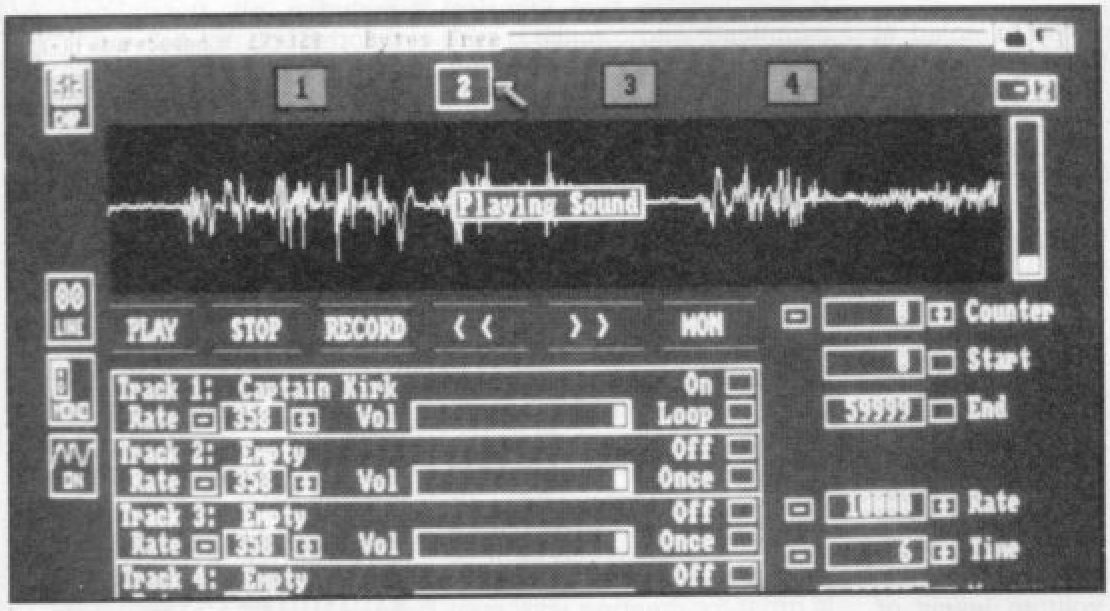
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TGM019

SAMPLING—

A rich man's game no longer



The price of making electronic music's been coming down and down. Now TGM reveals Future Sound, the ST sampler for little more than the cost of a game, and Master Sound, an Amiga program with IFF and stereo sampling for not quite twice the price

● Page 86

Improve the features

That's what this month's top letter writer says to all software houses — although his comments are aimed at the FOFT manual. if Gremlin improve features, such as rewriting the manual and adjusting the difficulty level for the Amiga version, they will obviously have the best game ever on their hands.

● Page 102

A MUG's game is longer

Communications aren't all serious when it comes to diving in with hundreds of others via a modem and playing multiuser games.

● Page 91



To be cancelled due to lack of interest

Fleet Street really isn't interested in computer gaming, preferring obscure sports much more. But as TGM discovers, some PR people in the business think the major software houses are to blame for the lack of newspaper coverage and support

● Page 100

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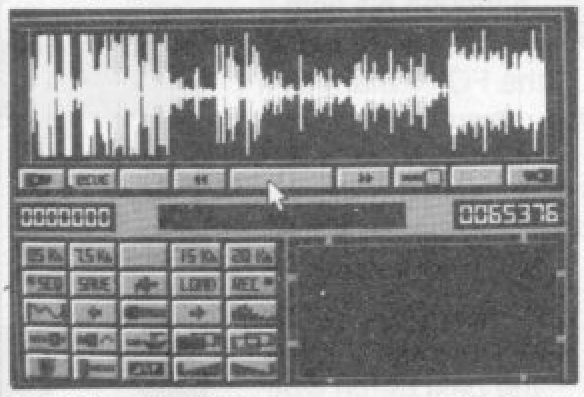
SAMPLERS ■

Cheap at twice the price

Samplers for the ST normally roll in around the £80-100 mark — cheap compared to professional hardware, yet an expensive mistake if you discover you're not really that interested in the whole sampling lark.

But now Software Horizons have released a sampler for little more than the cost of a game. In the first of our sampling features, Robin Candy reviews Master Sound.

The best news about *Master Sound* is, of course, that £34.95 will buy all the hardware and software you need to start sampling: the only extras required are the leads to connect your ST up to a sound source and a hi-fi. It's not cheap and nasty, either, for *Master Sound* comes of a good family; it was designed and programmed by 2-Bit Systems and Ferry Rawasi, both previously responsible for Replay 4 on the ST and



AMAS on the Amiga.

And though it's almost 50% cheaper than their previous packages, *Master Sound* still includes all the usual editing facilities plus a number of extra features, making it the best value-for-money sampler yet.

Sounds can be sampled at 5-20kHz — the higher the frequency is, the better the quality, but this limits sample length. The maximum length of a sample depends on a combination of frequency setting and the memory of your ST, but a 520STFM set at 20kHz can easily produce 30 seconds of sample time.

Master Sound includes a number of options to analyse a sound before you sample it. A 34-bar spectrum analyser displays the volume levels of the different frequencies which make up a sound, an oscilloscope shows the sound's waveform, and a real-time VU meter shows the overall volume of a sound. (This can be set so that recording won't start till a particular volume is reached.)

Once a sound has been recorded into the ST, it can be altered in a number of ways:

■ For a start, unwanted sections can be discarded!

■ A magnification facility provides 250 levels of magnification, making editing much easier.

■ Any part of the sample can be block-copied to another section to produce a Max Headroom stutter effect.

n The overlay function mixes two samples together. If you overlay two identical samples and make sure they're slightly out of sync, you get an echo effect.

n The whole sample or any part of it can be looped, reversed, or faded in or out.

n If the pitch is all wrong you can decrease or increase it by up to half an octave either way.

Sequencing too

One of *Master Sound*'s main selling features is the built-in option to sequence samples. Memory permitting, up to 18 edited samples can be assigned their own playback key. The samples can then be played back in real time. This is great for creating your own remixes of your favourite songs. Your own sequence can be up to an incredible 20 minutes long! This sequence is also editable, and allows for other samples to be dubbed over the top.

Compositions can be played back independently of the sampling software, using another program included in the package. This features an editable scrolling message and animated graphics which can be altered using *Cyberpaint*. (Software Horizons are running a competition where owners of *Master Sound* can win £1,000 by sending them their demos.)

Master Sound features most of the options you'd expect from a sampler costing around £100, as well as a few useful extras — the only serious omission is the lack of MIDI support. It's a shame the ST's built-in MIDI ports couldn't have been put to good use. However, it's very easy to use, and the manual includes all the necessary information to get the samples working in STOS BASIC as well as a number of other languages.

So *Master Sound* represents great value for money. The sample sequencer alone is great fun to play with and can produce some very interesting results.

Available on ST from: Software Horizons, *5 Oakleigh Mews, London N20 9QH* (01) 446-9146.

There are plans for an Amiga version, but no firm release dates yet.

You ain't heard nuthin' yet!

...for in next month's TGM, Jason Sheldon reviews the latest sampler from top Commodore company Trilogic. Listen out for Back Bytes in TGM020, on sale June 22.

Bright future for Amiga sound

An Amiga version of *Master Sound* would undoubtedly find a major rival in the slick *Future Sound* from Applied Visions. While at £79.95 it's almost double the cost, IFF compatibility and stereo sampling make it an attractive package.

Recording a sound is very easy — just plug your sound source into the sampler (either the stereo RCA phono sockets or the 3.5mm MIC socket). Adjust the slider control on top of the sampler to set the recording level, then click on the RECORD option.

Future Sound can cope with mono or stereo samples, and when switched to mono mode it can sample up to 42kHz — compared to 20kHz in stereo. As always, sample length depends on a combination of free memory and sample frequency.

When a sample has been recorded, it's assigned its own track along with the sample name. There are four tracks, each with their own volume, playback rate and once/loop controls. They can be played all together or in any combinations.

The Bag Of Tricks menu contains all the sound modification options. The normal features such as reverse, copy and mix sounds are found on this menu. ZERO SOUND allows you to create a totally silent section in the sample, and SCALE SOUND is used to make sections louder or softer. All the options on this menu can be used on all or part of a sample.

Samples can be saved out in two formats — either *Future Sound*'s own, which is compatible with the public-domain music program Jukebox, or in IFF which is the standard sample format used by many music packages including Electronic Arts's *Deluxe Music Construction Set*.

If a sample is saved in IFF, there are two additional options. ONE SHOT is intended for sound effects and speech: the sample is played exactly as it was saved with no alterations in pitch. And 3 OCTAVE is intended for sounds which are to be used as musical notes.

The manual explains all the options very clearly, making *Future Sound* easy to use. Full instructions on how to use the samples in your own programs are also included.

Altogether, *Future Sound* is one of the best sound sampling packages available for the Amiga, and owners of IFF music packages will certainly find it very useful and at £79.95 it's definitely worth buying.

Applied Visions: Jersey Supreme Works, *538-546 Whippendell Road, Watford, Herts WD1 1QN* (0923) 818078.

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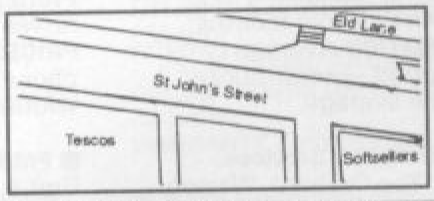
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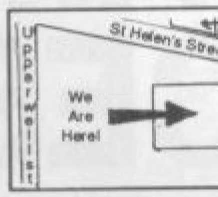
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GUIDE TO REPAIR SERVICES

No matter how much you care for a computer, eventually something goes wrong.

And you can bet your life it'll happen after the guarantee has expired, so you can forget about sending it back to the manufacturers. In most cases, they won't want to know.

Before packing your computer off to a repair firm, check to see if your local computer dealer can recommend a local repair outfit.

Phone the company you choose and try to get a rough guide of the cost of the repair, how long it will take — and whether they'll give a warranty to do it again for free if the repair doesn't work.

Make sure that the quoted price includes parts, labour, VAT, and return postage.

When sending your computer by post, pack it carefully — preferably in the original box.

Always include a letter with your name, address, and telephone number and the effects of the fault.

Send the whole package by recorded delivery — just 24p on top of the stamp cost — and pay the extra cash for an advice-of-delivery slip (25p if you ask for it when you post the package, 65p if you leave it till later).

That way you know it's got there.

■ A1 Computer Services.
Unit 9, Paddock Mount Offices, Dawley, Telford, Shropshire TF4 3PR (0952) 502737.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED 'Virtually any computer' — including Spectrum, C64/128, BBC, 16-bits, C16, Vic20 and Plus 4.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers; also full disk-drive service for £25.
PRICES Mostly £25-£30, but C128 is £42.50.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ BCL (Best Computers Ltd).
Galaxy Audio Visual, first floor, 230 Tottenham Court Road, London W1A 3AP (01) 631-0139 or 580-6640.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All 8-bit and 16-bit including PCs.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED All.
PRICES A typical small repair would cost £15-£20.
WARRANTY Six months.
INFORMATION Free estimates. Galaxy Audio Visual also sell micros.

■ Cambridge Micro Surgery.
Unit 4, 377B Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 4DH (0223) 410234.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, C64, BBC, Amstrad, PCs.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, monitors, disk drives etc.
PRICES Cheapest is 48K Spectrum at £18.95 plus cost of parts; others from £23.50.
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION Will provide annual maintenance for business micros, on a contract basis.

■ The Computer Factory.
Analytic Engineering Ltd, Unit 18A, Grainger Road Industrial Estate, Southend SS2 5DD (0707) 618455.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All major models except Atari.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Disk drives and printers.
PRICES £7-£40.
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION Free estimates.

■ Electronic & Computer Services.
1000 Uxbridge Road, Hayes, Middlesex UB4 0RL (01) 573-2100.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED The full range of home computers — that includes all the well-known 8-bit and 16-bit machines.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Electronic & Computer Services will repair some peripherals, but write or phone for details in case yours isn't included.
PRICES According to the problem. Phone for a quote.
WARRANTY Write or phone for details. The warranty only covers the problem repaired, not the whole computer.
INFORMATION Turnaround varies, depending on the problem, from two days to a week.
Electronic & Computer Services also sell spare parts. Again, write or phone for details.

■ Hindley Electronics.
97 Market Street, Hindley, Wigan, Lancashire WN2 3AA (0942) 522743.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, C16/64, Vic20, CPC.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Some.
PRICES Set price for each machine, ranging from £17 (48K Spectrum) to £25. 1541 disk drives £32.50.
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION Average two-day turnaround — well quicker than the average.

■ HS Computer Services.
Unit 2, The Orchard, Warton, Preston, Lancashire PR4 1BE (0772) 632686.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All Spectrums.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Phone.
PRICES From £14.95.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ Ladbroke Computing International.
33 Ormskirk Road, Preston, Lancashire PR1 2QP (0772) 21474 or 27236.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Mainly Atari.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers and disk drives.
PRICES According to machine — for example ST £34.50, XL/130 XE £23 (these prices include VAT).
WARRANTY Phone for information.

■ Microtech Computer Services.
216-219 Cotton Exchange Building, Old Hall Street, Liverpool L3 9LA (051) 236-2208.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED ST, Amiga, BBC, Amstrads.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, monitors; also electric typewriters and other office equipment.
PRICES Start from £30 — call Mike Lopez at Microtech for a quote.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ MP Electronics.
Wendling, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 2LZ (0362) 87327.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, C64, BBC B, PCs — in fact all major makes except ST and Amiga.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, plotters, monitors, disk drives etc.
PRICES All-inclusive prices for most machines — 48K Spectrum £15, 128K Spectrum, BBC B and C64 £27.50, PCs from £20-£100+. These rates cover all faults except those caused by other people's botched repairs!
WARRANTY Phone for information.
INFORMATION Free estimates. £20 repair and overhaul service for 48K Spectrums — MP Electronics replace sockets, keyboard membrane etc and will repair any faults that develop within six months of overhaul.

■ Ortec Micro Computers.
ORC GEC ITEC, GEC Switch Gear, Distribution Division, Higher Openshaw, Manchester M11 1FL (061) 301-2210.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All home micros and PCs.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, monitors and disk drives.
PRICES Depends on fault — phone for details.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ PM Engineering.
Unit 8, New Road, St Ives, Cambridgeshire PE17 4BG (0480) 61394.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All home computers.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, monitors and disk drives.
PRICES Phone. There's a set repair price for each computer, regardless of the fault and including all parts and labour.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ RA Electronics.
133 London Road South, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 0AX (0502) 566289.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All Spectrums.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Phone.
PRICES Spectrum 48K £14, Spectrum 128K £20.
INFORMATION RA Electronics also sell components.

■ Roebuck Designs.
Victory Works, Birds Hill, Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 1HX (0462) 480723 or 480929.
JOYSTICKS REPLACED Roebuck Designs run a clever joystick-replacement service which offers faster turnaround than a repair firm might.
Send in your broken joystick — any model — and they'll send back a second-hand but working stick of the same model. Later, they repair yours and pass it on to another customer.
PRICE £4.50 including return postage.

■ Swindon ITEC.
6 Oppenheimer Centre, Greenbridge Road, Swindon SN3 3JD (0793) 611808.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, C64/128, BBC B and Master series, CPC.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED 5.25-inch disk drives, monitors, cassette-deck alignment.
PRICES Spectrum from £18, others from £25 (but small repairs may be cheaper).
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION Most done within seven working days.

Attention repair firms!

If you would like a mention in the Back Bytes repair pages, please send the relevant details to Back Bytes, TGM, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB, including a phone number and the manager's name (for our files).

■ Telegames.
Kilby Bridge, Wigston,

Leicestershire LE8 1TE
(0533) 880445 or 813606.
CONSOLES REPAIRED Atari VCS2600, Colecovision, Intellivision, Sega.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Phone to ask.
PRICES VCS2600 £17.95, Colecovision £14.95, Intellivision £19.95, Sega £14.95.
WARRANTY 90 days.
INFORMATION Telegames promise to return the console to you just three days after they've received it. They're also the official UK repair centre for Sega and Colecovision.

■ Verran Micro-Maintenance.
Albany Park, Frimley Road, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2PL
(0276) 66266.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, Amstrad, Commodore.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, monitors.
PRICES Range from £19.95 for Spectrum to £95 for Amstrad PC1512.
INFORMATION Established six years. Approved by Amstrad.

■ Video Vault.
140 High Street West, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8HJ
(04574) 66555.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Most.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Phone.
PRICES From £19.95, according to machine.
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION While-you-wait service in Manchester.

■ VSE Technical Services.
Unit 6, 8 Nursery Road, London SW9 8BP (01) 738-7707.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All Spectrum, Amstrad, Atari and Commodore models.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Opus Discovery drive (partner Ian Vaudrey is official repairperson for the Sinclair Discovery Club).
PRICES Each model has a set price which covers all repairs except very major ones like keyboard or disk-drive replacement. Spectrums range from £12.90 to £17.90; C64 is £19.90, C128 £24.90; CPCs range from £21.90 to £24.90; all PCWs are £31.90.
Parts, labour, VAT and return postage within the UK are all included.
WARRANTY Four months.

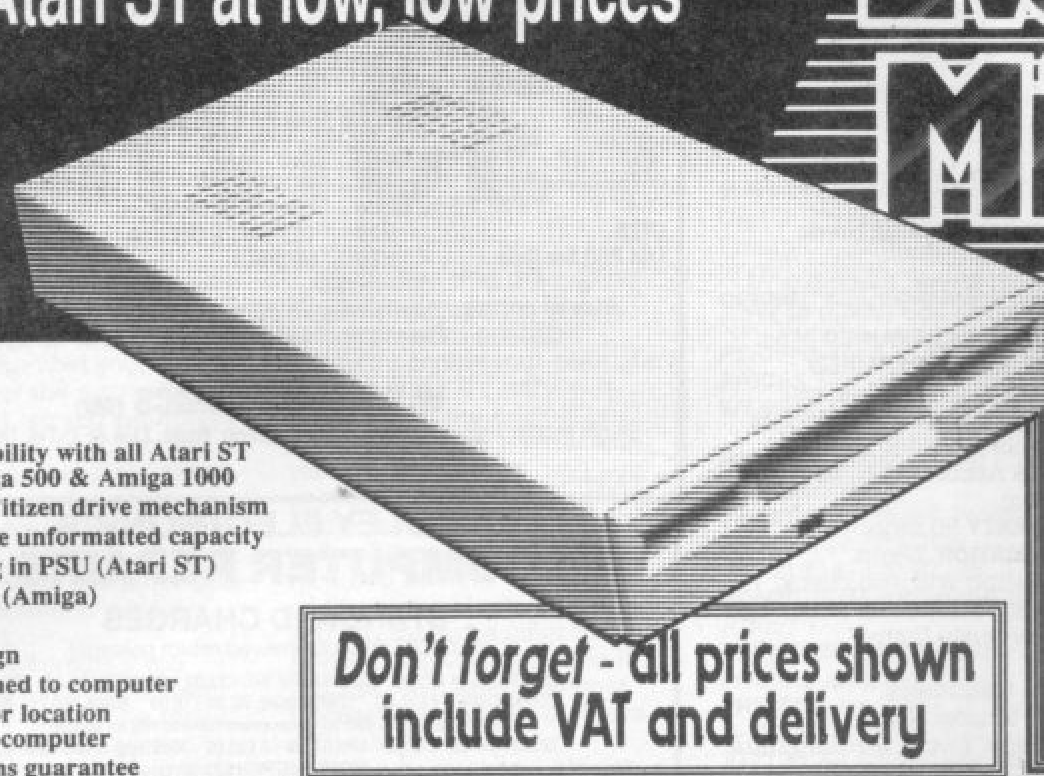
■ Wight Computing Home Micros.
122 High Street, Ryde, Isle of Wight PO33 2SU (0983) 68978.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Most.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers and monitors, but check first that the service is available for older models.
PRICES According to the problem.
WARRANTY 90 days.
INFORMATION Wight Computing will also check, clean etc computers which are not obviously faulty.

■ WTS Electronics.
Studio Master House, Chaul End Lane, Luton, Bedfordshire LU4 8EZ (0582) 491949.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All home computers.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, disk drives, modems etc.
PRICES 'Very competitive on all models.'
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION WTS Electronics promise to complete the repair within one week from the day they receive the machine. Authorised Amstrad/Sinclair repair firm.

■ Wynter Electronics.
Unit 30F, Atlas Village, Oxgate Lane, Staples Corner, London NW2 7HU (01) 452-5660.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, Commodore, BBC, Atari, PCs.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Phone for details.
PRICES £18 upward, depending on machine.
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION Repair done in one week.

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Panasonic KXP1124 superb value 10" multifont 24 pin with 6 typestyles	£319.00
Epson LX800 popular 10" 180/25 cps	£199.00
Epson LQ500 good 24pin printer 150/50 cps	£319.00
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COMMS ■

It's a mug's game

The more the merrier — that's the secret of multiuser games, where dozens of players share the same adventures through a mystical modem link.

In this month's comms commentary, Zog gets bitten by a giant spider... and that's nothing compared to the phone bill.



Facts to amaze and astound, number one: multiuser games are a century old. Well, according to my calculations, sometime around now we should hit the moment when approximately 100 player years have been spent on exploring, playing, testing and interacting with the main multiuser games (MUGs) around the country.

In other words, assuming that MUGs have only been around for about three years, some 250 players exist somewhere in the country who have spent their entire lives since early 1986 playing a three-hour shift every day, come rain or shine. The costs of games vary, but assuming an average 50p per hour — the cost of *Gods* and *Zone* — someone could have earned in the region of £150,000 per year for the last three years.

Why this addiction? As with anything new, at first you'll probably be rather dazzled by the whole experience: strange personas shouting, long room descriptions and weird noises that mean something to everyone except you... Screens full of text also tend to obscure the single line in the middle that tells you about the spider that just arrived in the room and bit you, and even if you did see it you haven't the foggiest how to cure yourself before your character dies horribly.

For this sort of thing, it's useful to have experience in ordinary micro adventures such as *The Pawn*, *The Hobbit*, or *Guild Of Thieves* (called SUGs, or single-user games, in the jargon).

The commands that let you drive your 'persona' around a MUG owe a lot to the original adventure, *Colossal Cave*. From it came the ten basic direction movements (N, W, S, E, NE, NW, SE, SW, U, D), 'score' (SC) and your possessions, or 'inventory' (I). Since then, good ideas from one game have often been added to others, either because the coder likes them or because players requested them (the keep-the-punters-happy technique).

For example, the description of a room is commonly done as a long piece of text, which may have clues of course. Players who wish to race around don't want all the text, so BRIEF causes the game to just print a couple of words instead, simply saying which room you're in.

If you're not sure about this location, the command L ('look') will give you the full description anyway. And any other people or objects in the room with you will get listed, after the room text. Since a game usually tells you what everyone is carrying if you enter a room but often fails to tell you if they enter a room that you're already in, the 'glance' command (GL) has evolved — it gives a brief room description and then a full description of the players with you.

Another rich field of cross-fertilisation is in the interactions between players. The early SMILE, SAY, and LAUGH commands have been supplemented with a vocabulary like this:

BLUSH CHUCKLE CRY
CUDDLE GIGGLE GRIN
GUFFAW KISS NOD HEAD
POKE SHRUG TICKLE
WAVE WHIMPER YAWN

If these are not all available, or if there's another emotion you wish to display which doesn't yet exist, the EMOTE or EM command is often a general catch-all. You can type EM GASPS and the other personas near you will get something like ZOG GASPS.

A MUG is partly a technical exercise for programmers, since it requires various skills and a real-time response. (The original *MUD* was written just to demonstrate some programming techniques by a university lecturer and students.)

But it's also a sort of acting, where you can be whatever character you like, regardless of your (real) sex, class, age, race, shape or accent. You can play at being characters or personas that are nothing like the 'real' you, just to see what it's like, or to experiment with some of your hidden sides without embarrassment. The social side of some games is their key reason why people keep coming back again and again.

Finally, of course, there's the gameplay — collecting points and racing around, solving logical puzzles and exploring the game's universe. You could do it for a hundred years, and still not be bored.

MAJOR MUGS

■ **AMP** (0202) 678533. Evenings/weekends.
■ **Conquest** (0483) 275455. Evenings/Sundays.
■ **Gods** (01) 994-9119. 24 hours a day. Run by Tiger Tiger. Zone is now on the same number.
■ **Mirrorworld** (0883) 844044 or 844164. 24 hours a day. Sysop is Pippin.
■ **Shire** (061) 434-9927. Evenings/weekends.
■ **Wanderland** (01) 680-5330. 24 hours a day. Sysop is Ted Greene, aka Wanda the Arch Witch.
■ **Zone** (01) 994-9119. 24 hours a day. Originally free and based in Croydon, Zone is now on the Gods system in London, with 14 lines. Run by Gandalf.
■ **Shades**, via Prestel, with a scrolling gateway too, as *shades#.

Pique time: what it costs

The big problem for MUG players in this country is the cost of comms: it can take several hundred hours to explore a MUG, build a map, meet and recognise some of the main characters, and learn what and where is dangerous to the 'life' of your persona. Because some games are free, the money paid out for all this adventuring through a strange land goes entirely to British Telecom!

They do very nicely, thank you, just installing a couple of lines and watching the units clock up. And, of course, if you live in a remote part of the country you'll incur long-distance charges.

The only exceptions are games on networks such as Micronet and Compunet, which have local numbers for just about the entire country. This is brilliant, till you realise you're paying 6p a minute to play *Shades*!

At the other end of the spectrum are the small games run by enthusiasts. They may be fun to play, but they probably have only a couple of lines and be a bit creaky.

Of course, getting to know everybody (if you can get on a system with only two lines) will probably be easier, and you may be interested in helping debug or code the game itself, rather than just playing it.

INFORMATION DESK

The ST is miles better than the Amiga. No, on second thoughts it's the other way round. Well, what about the SAM, then... hack your way through the upgrade jungle in this month's Information Desk, as the Back Bytes experts solve some toughies.

Which micro?

I have a budget of £220 to spend on a new computer system but I can't seem to make my mind up on which one to buy. I would mainly use my computer to play games, but I'd also like to design graphics. The systems I'm considering are the MSX II, MGT SAM Coupe, C64 and PC Engine.
S Cadette, Walthamstow

If you're looking to do serious graphics work as well as games-playing, you've really got to get into the ST or Amiga, which are a little above your price limit (though you can easily find a second-hand model around £200 — look in the TGM Classifieds).

On paper the SAM Coupe looks very impressive: a better sound chip than the Amiga, graphics to rival an ST, 256K RAM, a built-in disk drive and a Spectrum-compatible mode. However, few people have yet seen it in action. And while the Coupe is compatible with existing Spectrum software, there is no guarantee that software houses will write to exploit the Coupe's other modes.

The Coupe is expected to be released in September (see this month's news).

The C64 is getting on a bit now, but the sheer number of sales ensures software support for a few years yet. Second-hand machines can be picked up quite cheaply, and there's a vast back catalogue of excellent games, many of which are available as budget re-releases. It's also a good low-cost computer for designing graphics: there are excellent art utilities as well as a large library of public-domain pictures.

The MSX II has a large range of games, mainly arcade conversions, many of which are very good. But though there are many users in Japan, the machine's never been popular here — so you may find it hard to get hold of software, peripherals and repair services.

The PC Engine is one of the new breed of games consoles where the games look and play exactly like their arcade counterparts. Software costs around £20-30 per game and so far only a few games are available in the UK, but we expect more. But if you're really keen on designing graphics forget the Engine — it's a games machine only.

ST to TV

I own an Atari 520STFM and a Hitachi CPT-1644 colour TV with RGB input. What type of lead would I need to connect the ST to the TV's RGB DIN socket, and would I be able to get sound output?
Godwin Jumbo, Charlton

If you take the connector pinout specifications of the ST's monitor socket and the Hitachi's RGB DIN socket along to your local TV store they should be able to make up a lead for you for a few pounds. Alternatively, you can phone Hitachi with your problem and they should also be able to make up a lead for you.

The ST monitor socket includes a sound-out pin, while the TV RGB socket includes a sound-in pin, so you should be able to get sound through your TV.
Hitachi: ☎ (01) 848-8787.



One into two does go: see Seeing Double

Seeing double

I have been wondering if it would be possible for me to connect my Amiga A500 to two TVs. If so, what would I need to do this?
Paul Yeates, Borough Green

All you need is an aerial splitter and a couple of aerial leads. Your local TV store should be able to supply you with both. Plug the splitter into the Amiga modulator, then connect the leads to the TVs, and you should have double vision double vision.

Wasting £100?

I have owned an Amstrad CPC464 since they were first released and it has given me many hours of pleasure. However, I feel that it is has been superseded by the 16-bit computers. I'm interested in buying an ST or Amiga but I've heard conflicting reports about both machines. Is the Amiga worth the extra £100?
Carl Kidson, Wolverhampton

As far as games are concerned, there's little difference between the two machines; often Amiga games are ported straight over from the ST, because they have the same central processor (a Motorola 68000). So if you're going to use your machine mainly for playing games, the ST should suffice.

Where applications are concerned, the choice depends on exactly what you want to do. The Amiga does have better graphics and sound, which makes it first choice for art and music packages. However, the ST's built-in MIDI ports allow it to be connected to music equipment such as synthesizers, sequencers and drum machines. (Of course, you can get MIDI interfaces for the Amiga, but it will increase the cost of your setup.)

For word processing and DTP the ST is perhaps more popular than the Amiga, while amateur programmers tend to favour the Amiga because of its custom chips and more sophisticated operating system.



Fantasy seeker

In TGM**009** you reviewed the *Fantasy Hero* RPG. Where can I get hold of a copy?
Kevin Ellis, Stoke-on-Trent

Your best bet is to try Games Workshop, who stock most fantasy RPGs. They can be contacted on (0773) 769731.

Bemused by bit density? Defeated by databases? Flabbergasted by FOR...NEXT routines? Agog about Amigas? Send all your computing queries to Information Desk, TGM, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.

TOOLBOX ■ Products and news to make life bearable

AMIGA

3-D anims — under £50

The surge in Amiga animation (TGM018) continues with Artronic's *C-Light*, providing real-time 3-D animation for just £49.95.

Complex scenes can be constructed quickly by combining simple shapes such as cylinders and cubes, which can then be stretched, squashed or rotated using the built-in brush commands.

C-Light also includes ray-tracing commands — used to produce true shadows, mirror surfaces, multiple light sources, and fish-eye and telephoto-lens effects. And with the 3-D editor you can rotate scenes and view them from any angle, as well as zoom in and out.

The entire package, including two disks and tutorials, should be available now or very soon.

Artronic: *1-3 Haywra Crescent, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 5BG* (0423) 525325.

ATARI ST

Sequence and ye shall find

Slavered over the Back Bytes feature on sequencers? Now MCM Distribution have acquired the UK distribution rights for *Real Time* from Intelligent Music. The £199 ST sequencing package offers up to 256 tracks and looks set to rival Steinberg's *Pro 24*.

MCM Distribution: *9 Hatton Street, London NW8* (01) 724-4104.

PC ● PS/2

Scan do!

Logitech have converted their Mac image-scanner for the PC (£199) and PS/2 (£239) — and it should work with nearly all printers. Most printers, including lasers, can only cope with 300 dots per inch (dpi). So the new improved ScanMan features an adjustable resolution from 100dpi up to 400dpi.

Logitech: *166-170 Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington WA4 6QA* (0925) 413501.

AMIGA ● PC

Viruses get the boot

The virus-killers are fast catching up with their data-destroying targets — and Watchdog Security Software and Practical Software are among the latest to release antivirus programs.

Watchdog's *Sleepsafe* (£29.95) is a virus detection program for the PC that resides in RAM without interfering with your programs. Once installed, the program prevents all known viruses from entering the system, as well as accidental erasure of files.

Practical's *Amiga Virus Killer* (£9.95) comes with an endorsement from Commodore. It includes an up-to-date database of all known viruses, and can also learn to keep you covered from new strains.

When *Virus Killer* detects the presence of an unwanted virus, it kills it and also repairs any damage done to your disk.

Watchdog Security Software: *5 Oakleigh Mews, London N20 9QH* (01) 446-9146.

Practical: *7D Kings Yard, Carpenters Road, London E15 2HD* (01) 533-2918.

ATARI ST

DTP gains a star with Calamus

Is time running out for *Timeworks?* Electric Distribution's ST DTP package, long regarded as leading the field, should soon face stiff opposition from *Calamus*, now imported by Gainstar.

Calamus, actually produced by ST manufacturers Atari but not officially available here, offers all the usual DTP features along with a host of extras. Text can be made to sit at any angle; a special text editor is included; and graphics can be imported in a variety of formats including *Degas* and IMG.

But *Calamus* is aimed at people who are really serious about DTP — it requires a minimum of 1Mb RAM and ideally 4Mb RAM, a hard disk, an A3 monitor and a 24-pin or laser printer.

At £259.95 the import is £140 cheaper than the planned UK version, but it doesn't benefit from the latest improvements and includes several well-known bugs. So if money is no object, you'd be best advised to wait till *Calamus* is officially released.

Gainstar: *Unit 1, rear of 7 Wellington Road, Sandhurst, Surrey GU17 8AW* (0252) 877431.

AMIGA ● ST ● PC ● SPECTRUM ● BBC

MGT pass their driving tests!

Changing computers doesn't mean throwing away your disk drive, thanks to Miles Gordon Technology (MGT). For the south-Wales-based firm, famous for their Spectrum peripherals and soon-to-be-released SAM micro, have developed a drive that works with ST, Amiga, PC, Spectrum and BBC!

'It's a good example of how an end-user idea develops into a product,' says MGT boss Alan Miles. Micro owners used to ring up the company asking whether they could use, say, a Spectrum drive with their new ST. And of course, the answer was always no.

Now MGT's new drives, which are available in both 3.5-inch and 5.25-inch versions, feature easily-accessible DIP switches which you set to configure the drive for your machine (like a printer).

Special cables are available to connect the drive to different micro models. Buy a new computer, and all you need to do is flick the DIP switches and fit a new cable.

Already available is a 3.5-inch drive with internal power supply, costing £129.95. A 3.5-incher using an external power supply will be coming out soon, at £5 or £10 less — this is suitable for the Amiga.

And the 5.25-inchers should be available end May — again, with either internal or external power supply.

Cables cost £18.50 for the 16-bit machines, and £10 for the Spectrum and BBC.

MGT: *Lakeside, Phoenix Way, Swansea Enterprise Park, Swansea SA7 9EH* (0792) 791100.

SAM update: see news.

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3. Drunken Master	£24.95	13. The Legendary Axe	£24.95
4. Victory Run	£24.95	14. Space Harrier	£29.95
5. Chan & Chan	£24.95	15. Dragon Spirit	£24.95
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7. R-Type I	£24.95	17. Vigilante	£29.95
8. R-Type II	£24.95	18. Son Son II	£24.95
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Atari ST, must be in good condition, no more than 170. Phone 0296 415 786 after 3.30pm. PS: I don't want any games with it, only the usual stuff, mouse etc.

Sega system for sale with 10 games including Shinobi, Thunderblade, Secret Command, World Soccer. All good condition. Also Rapid Fire unit. Sell for 170. Phone (067284)387 after 6pm.

Wanted completed or semi-completed programmes for all types of home computers. Send details to J. Clarke, 169 Chiswick Village, Chiswick, London W4 3DG or phone 01 994 6657.

Sega games and add-ons, must be in good to excellent condition. Send lists and phone number to Graham Schofield, 20 Warwick Avenue, Staines, Middx. TW18 1DP. Reasonable prices paid. Answer ad ASAP for a quick reply.

FOR SALE

Amstrad 6128 with colour monitor, over 300 worth of software, disks and tapes, Multiface 2, data recorder, joystick, over 50 magazines. Also blank disks. Offers over 300. Phone 0642 570091 any time.

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Atari ST. Software for sale, very latest 3 to 10 each. Predator, Soldiem of Light, Chucky Egg, Bounce Out. One buy 5. PO Bax 6g, 2980AD Riddenkerk, Holland.

Amstrad CPC 6128, colour monitor, tape deck, joystick, games on tape and disk, magazines. Excellent condition. Sell for 300. Tel 051 546 2518.

Spectrum +2 boxed in good condition with 60 games (all originals) inc. Platoon, Where Time Stood Still and Bionic Commando. Extended warranty until August 1990. Sell for 180. Phone Medway (0634) 240 721 anytime.

Atari 520 STFM plus 1 Meg drive. 4 months old, 30 games, all well known, inc. Falcon, Op. Wolf, Side Winder. Worth over 500. Sell around 300 or swap for Amiga A500. Ring Matt on 0742 352669.

CBM 128, colour monitor, disk drive, printer, all boxed, good condition, loads of games including imports, lots of Microprose, flight sims, etc. Some cost over 30! First offer around 495 gets this bargain. Phone anytime 0600 6366.

Amiga 500 and monitor (boxed), plus joystick, 50-ish disks, Dpaint, various games and mouse. Will sell for 450. What a bargain! Phone Richard on (0293) 562125. Quick sale if possible please. Thanks very much!

Sega console plus 8 games including Out Run, Double Dragon, Action Fighter, Alex Kid, Wonder Boy 1&2, Hang on, Astro Warrior. Worth 250, will sell for 150. Tel (01) 810 5948. (Very good condition).

Atari 520STFM, mouse, Competition Pro and Arcade joysticks, software worth 120 including Bubble Bobble and Gauntlet II, joystick extension leads, magazines. All boxed and immaculate condition 260 ono. Must collect in Oxon (0608) 737332.

Japanese Nintendo for sale with 100 games to back it up. Phone for details. Sega system with 9 games 140. Phone Perv on 0602 299435.

Atari STFM, immaculate condition, plus 1MB Cumana second drive and many games including Falcon, STOS, Dungeon Master, R-Type etc. 700 new, sell for 375 ono. Phone Steven (0689) 33089 (Orpington, Kent). Quick sale please.

Atari STFM, still boxed, joy stick, 450 worth of software inc : Falcon, Dungeon Master, Degas Elite, Gunship, Carrier Command, Gauntlet II. Sell for 240. Write to : Richard, 4B Currents Lane, Harwich, Essex CO12 3DE.

Amiga games, all original, hardly used. Falcon, Eliminator, Starglider II, Carrier Command. All 10. Please contact Reuben Wilkinson at: Harbledown, Westland Green, Little Hadham, Herts. SG11 2AQ. Tel: 0279 842675.

Amiga and modulator with several games, 300. Also Sega system with three games, 60. Contact D Rowley, 41 Bradenstoke, Chippenham, Wilts. SN15 4EU. Phone (0249) 890355.

Atari 520 STFM, 6 months old, still under 1 year guarantee, mouse, joystick plus R-Type. Sell for 225. Tel. John on 01 391 4187 eve/weekends, Surrey.

C64 for sale, (original packaging) with Cruiser, 90 worth of mags, over 550 of software including Armalyte, Emlyn Hughes Soccer, Micro Soccer and LED Storm. Bargain at 180. Phone Martin at Biggin Hill (0959) 74757.

Amiga Public Domain demos, music, games 1.60 each or trade. I am looking for a pay phone for house, will pay 40 PD disks. Phone 0555 811362 after 6pm.

S20 STFM Super Pack for sale, as new. Unopened, unwanted present. A bargain at 335 ono, complete with joystick + games. Phone (0430) 872395, ask for Christopher.

Amstrad CPC 6128 and modulator, built in disk drive with data cassette recorder, over 400 worth in software. Top titles, art package and mouse. Offers around 400, must sell. (021) 784 7878 (Darryl).

MSX games: All originals, 53 tapes, including Arkanoid, Aliens etc. 2 Roms: Vaxol and Super Laydock (worth 20 each). 45 the lot ono. Phone (0843) 603654, ask for Matthew.

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Atari ST software for sale: Speedball, Pawn, Powerdrome, World Games, International Soccer, Arcade Force Four, Double Dragon, Buggy Boy, Black Lamp, only 5 to 10 each. Write to Bruce Robertson, 9 Poplar Place, Oakbank, Perth, Scotland PH1 1HS.

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Aztec Adventure Sega game for sale. Brand new it cost 24.99 but will sell for 18 or swap for another Sega game. Phone Carl on 021 378 2750.

Atari 520STFM, 1 year old, boxed as new, mint condition, with manuals, mouse, 5 original games, language disk, powerful copier, disk box. Worth over 400, sell for 280. Tel 021 421 5541.

Amiga 500 plus Citizen 120D nine pin printer, with lots of printer paper. Hardly used and in good condition. Also included, modulator and blank disks. For only 450. Tel (01) 423 2667. Phone between 4-6pm.

16 Sega games for sale. 10 each, Shinobi, Thunder Blade, Space Harrier, Wonder boy II and many more. Also light phaser and 3 shooting games 20. Phone 021 705 2018 after 5pm and ask for Andy.

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C64, C2N cassette, 2 joysticks, 400 software includes Op. Wolf, Micro Soccer, FM 2, Freeze Frame, Reset switch, copier. Good condition 170. Tel. Keith on 0322 613102 NOW!! On holiday 27th April till 6th May.

Atari 520STM, Hi-res monitor, printer, paper, 2 disk drives, sound sampler, 63 disks, 4000 labels, 11 originals, disk box, 3 joysticks, all boxed as new with manuals, worth 1177. Sell for 699. Phone Ripley 47164.

Atari 520STFM, excellent condition with box, plus 50 games incl. Ballistix, Barbarian, Xenon, 3 joysticks, extra leads, mouse and mat, 5 disks boxes, manuals and mags etc. Offers start at 300. Ring 01 845 6135.

CBM64, Excelerator disk drive, C2N datasette, Turbo Rom chip, loads of games. Also Atari VCS 2600 console. All only 200. Phone Dave on 01 555 4542 after 7pm.

Atari 520 STFM, one Meg, double sided drive, 2 joysticks, mouse and mats. Lots of games : Elite, Barbarian II, Crazy Cars II, and more. Boxed as new. Want quick sale, hence 290 ono. Call Mark: 0460 54132 after 6.30pm.

Amiga A500, plus TV modulator, mouse, joystick, manuals, 85 disks full of games, and disk storage box. Excellent condition 310 ono. Tel 0685 70361, ask for ROB.

Amiga games, IK+, LED Storm, Last Duel, Falcon F-16, all originals from 3.00 each. Call 01 500 8628 anytime.

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Bargain ST games sale. Carrier Command, Menace, U.M.S, Leatherneck. Only 7 each!! Bionic Commando 8. Outrun 6. War In Middle Earth 10! STOS 15! All originals - boxed etc. Tel: 01 674 0892 after 6pm only!!

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PEN PALS

Amiga contacts wanted all over the world. Write to Justin Little, 20 Harkness Avenue, Modbury, 5092 South Australia or phone Australia (08) 2637259.

Atari ST contacts wanted. 100% reply. Write to Steven Tayler, 20 Plas-y-Gamil Road, Goodwick, Dyfed SA64 0EL.

Amiga pen pals/contacts wanted, especially from Devon area (Exeter and Sidmouth area). Please write to: Mark, 44 Turnfurlong, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP21 7PT, England. No callers.

Amiga user wants contacts from all over the world. All letters replied. Write to Paul, 84 Grove Road, Hardway, Gosport, Hants. PO12 4JN, England.

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CONTROVERSY

Hold the front page!

...just don't put any games on it. Barnaby Page finds fault with what the papers say.

Three out of 19 ain't bad, I suppose. That's the number of national newspapers that actually deign to cover computing now and again. Out of all Britain's national press, often considered to be (at least in its variety) the best in the world, only The Guardian, the Financial Times and the Sunday Times run regular sections on what is arguably the biggest lifestyle change of the past decade: the personal computer, be it at office, school or home.

Why? Now nobody's arguing for hundreds of pages, but it seems odd when you consider the number of column inches given over to even the more obscure sports (in The Independent particularly), to high fashion (which is the preserve of a very few very rich people), even to chess.

The problem is not uniquely British, of course; though our cousins across the water in the oh-so-solemn North American press tend to take their computing more seriously, I remember the laughable situation at my first paper. There, on one of Canada's major big-city dailies, Pulitzer Prize-winning, packed with some 180 editorial staff, the weekly computing column was given as a sideline... to the agriculture correspondent! Maybe firms like Apple, Apricot and Bull can be blamed for that misunderstanding, but I doubt it.

Back here, one leading public-relations man who works for many important home-micro hardware and software companies has repeatedly tried to get papers like the Sunday Times interested in the games world. But, he complains, 'the national press don't seem to know what computer games are. They still tend to switch off when you mention computer games to them. They think it's something only very young kids are interested in, or its a passing phase like the hula hoop — a phase that's already passed.'



Streets apart: the Fleet Street press don't seem to understand what games are all about

Why? After all, there must be people on Fleet Street with an Amiga in the family. But every day thousands of stories are vying for space in the nationals, and this PR man puts much of the blame on software houses for not really bothering to get games the attention they deserve. 'To be perfectly honest with you,' he says — and PR people are always perfectly honest — 'I think it's partly the software houses' fault. They don't put enough money into trying to get stuff into Fleet Street. The companies really to blame are people like Ocean and US Gold, who are big enough to spend the money required but don't. It is possible, as Code Masters have shown — but it takes time.'

Ah, Code Masters — the people who simulated enough hype to get themselves into publications as diverse as Today, i-D, Management Today and Performance Car. Current wisdom has it that the great Code Masters press onslaught of 1987 was designed to promote a games console which they never released; whenever pressed on this, the Coders will only laugh and decline to comment, which once decoded is as good as a yes.

But were all those Code Masters columns really about computers? Our anonymous PR man disagrees: 'In a way Code Masters cheated because it wasn't really computers, it was kids making a lot of money.'

Now that's what WE call sensationalism. It isn't enough that millions of people use a micro every day; it isn't enough that a single game like MicroProse's Ultima IV can sell over 400,000 copies worldwide (more than many much-written-about books), or a single joystick (the Konix Speedking) find its way into half a million sweaty hands; no, it takes the gimmickry of the brothers Darling for somebody to realise that computer stars can be as colourful as rock stars (even hamster-eating ones), and therefore worth writing about.

Mirrorsoft's Tetris received considerable coverage because of its Russian origins when glasnost was flavour of the month (it's the only game I've ever seen referred to in my local Birmingham Post). Activision's Leisure Suit Larry even hit the FT — when pirate copies spread a virus through City banking computers. Ocean's Platoon made Radio One Newsbeat — but then it was a game of a film.

TV has provided perhaps the best coverage, and that's not surprising when you consider how visual games are. Both Rainbird's Weird Dreams and Activision's Time Scanner (previewed this issue) have appeared on Motormouth; Channel 4 made a brave stab at examining games in an episode of the oh-so-arty Signals programme earlier this spring, but made the mistake of treating it as a bizarre hobby, the preserve of a few hip hackers, rather than mainstream entertainment.

The BBC's one-off Software Show was Auntie's first attempt in recent history at getting to grips with computers (the excellent and long-running Tomorrow's World apart)... and prompted one national paper to wonder whether we really needed a whole hour devoted to boring old bits and bytes. Which really says it all.

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Obliterator	6.40	–
Operation Hermuz	6.40	–
Operation Wolf 6.40	–	
Pac-Land	5.90	8.50
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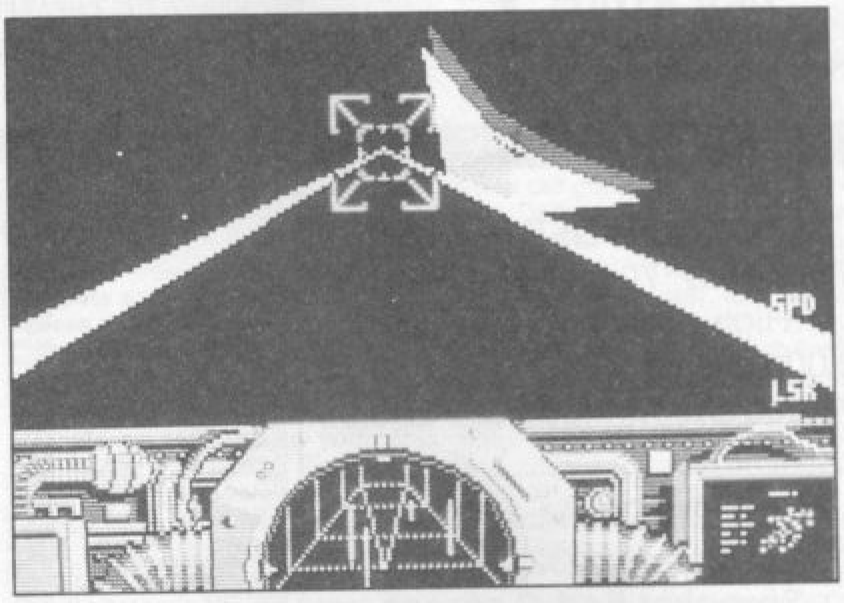
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READERPAGE

"If Gremlin improved upon FOFT, they'd have the best game ever on their hands"

But will they do it? £50 of software goes to Matthew Attoe for teaching Gremlin the real lesson of the FOFT saga.



The Games Machine STAR LETTER

FOFT must flop? Your opinion

■ Dear TGM
Following your recent review of *FOFT* (TGM**017**) I would like to raise some points. TGM is one of the major magazines available and therefore should be read by programmers and software houses. This would mean that a company like Gremlin Graphics would see that the major magazines did not rate the ST version of *FOFT* too highly, and would note all the bad points raised by the magazines.

Now, TGM said that if the game was not so hard etc, it would probably be the best game available to date. So if Gremlin improved upon these features, such as rewriting the manual, adjusting some difficulty etc for when the Amiga version is released, they would obviously have the best game ever on their hands.

Gremlin could turn round and say it would cost too much money to do this, but I thought software houses were always saying that they want to offer good value for money — so this should be no problem.

Gremlin have got a program which would make them a lot of money when released on the Amiga if it is good enough to justify people spending £30 on it. If not, the Federation of Free Traders could turn out to be the Flop of Free Traders. Gremlin have no excuse for releasing a substandard piece of software unless they are either too greedy or too lazy. I doubt they are either, but time will tell.
Matthew Attoe, Norwich

To be fair to Gremlin, it seems unlikely that they were aware of the big FOFT problem we highlighted: the sheer slowness. After all, as TGM017's review noted, they withdrew FOFT from the shops once to correct disk-saving problems; if they'd known of/believed in the other fault, they could have fixed it then.

And it's not entirely easy for a company like Gremlin to change a game after bad reviews appear. It had been advertised, distributors and retailers had been notified, duplication facilities had been arranged, and so on. Gremlin did what they had to do, commercially: they released the game. We did what we had to do: we told you what we thought of it. Gremlin have taken note of some criticisms , anyway; see this month's news.

■ Dear TGM
Re Issue 17, what a cover story! This must be the first time I have ever seen a cover picture that hasn't led to a praise-riddled preview of some new and gloriously marketable product. To be truthful, however, it does seem to highlight a major flaw in a lot of games released these days — the presentation and packaging improve but the gameplay is just a dim memory, something that used to exist when you had a Spectrum.

Nowadays, you can't swing a joystick for the number of shoot-'em-ups, beat-'em-ups and plain cockups flying around.

Not to mention F-16 simulators — when on earth is someone going to build the F-17 so the software producers can give us something else to crash-land at Mach 2?

Only Realtime ever got it right when, in giving us *Carrier Command*, they created something that was 'realistic' but above all highly playable — with the enemy moving slow enough so at least you got to see some very impressive filled 3-D effects, even if you couldn't blow them to kingdom come.

Why do so many companies copy mindless shoot-'em-ups, when they could follow in the footsteps of recognised classics like *Carrier Command*?

Meanwhile, everyone will be making games consoles after the staggeringly hyped preview coverage of the Konix Multi-System combined food mixer and objet d'art. This 'blue meanie' seems set to slaughter the games console market — just as Sir Clive Sinclair increased the delivery time each week, the Konix seems to acquire a new and unique feature.

Only when it's actually on sale will I believe it, and only if the games are original, fun and playable will I consider buying one.
Stephen Graham, Carlisle

We'd disagree that 'original','fun' and 'playable' always go together. Grandslam's Pac-Mania, for example, was a straightforward adaptation of a very old game, but hugely fun and addictive. Incentive's Driller was very original, and maybe playable, but surely not quite 'fun'.

We agree, though, that clones (of R-Type etc) and rip-offs are a bore... unless they improve on the original.

■ Dear TGM
Looking at *FOFT* on paper, it undoubtedly appears to be the *Elite*-basher many claim it to be, a seminal game, a milestone in game development, a classic, game of the year, etc.

However, it seems it was left to TGM, and TGM alone, to reveal the truth and the flaws in *FOFT*. It seems there is at last a magazine which

serves its readers and the public as a whole rather than the industry, advertisers and PR hypists.

Surely there is something wrong and sinister in this. There are virtually hundreds of computer-oriented mags available; how many of their readers will be forking out £30 for a piece of flawed software?

CS Cooper, HM Young Offenders Institution, Portland, Dorset

To be fair to other magazines (which we hate to be), several have given FOFT fairly negative reviews since TGM's cover story appeared. Media conspiracy theories are almost invariably a load of old Orics (but then we would say that, wouldn't we...).

■ Dear TGM
Thank you for your demolition job on *FOFT*. As one who has spent many a boring while trying to close with planets in *Elite*, I have no wish to repeat the experience in a worse form. This is how games reviewing should be: too often reviews are just a quick resume of a casual hour's play, without identifying deeper problems with the structure of a game.

However, I would take issue with your claim that '*FOFT* must flop'. Ought to flop, perhaps, but when the public goes out in droves and buys rubbish like *Out Run* despite warnings from all quarters, I doubt one bad review will dent sales that much.

Roger Musson, Edinburgh

We were using 'must' in the sense that placards use it when they say MAGGIE MUST GO.

'FOFT ought to flop, but probably won't, considering the minimal impact of media comment on market responses to heavily-promoted product' didn't fit on the cover.

Broken by repairs

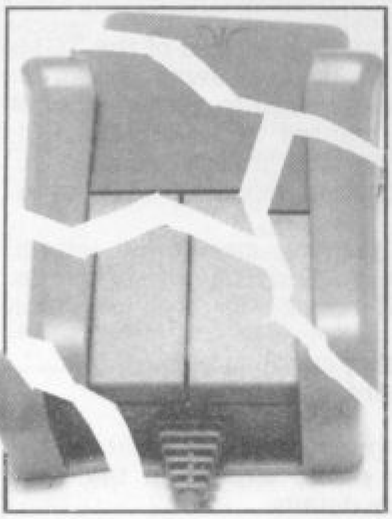
Dear TGM
I have a little cautionary tale to tell. The story begins in December 1987, when I purchased an ST and printer for use as a word processor and for playing games. The machine was purchased from an independent computer retailer in the city where I was at college, and the shop were very helpful with any problems I had.

Unfortunately, in late August a fault developed with the right-hand mouse button, which was irritating and made playing *Leaderboard* very difficult! No problem, I thought, it's still under guarantee...

I returned to the shop with my ST, only to be told that it would have to be repaired by their own repair department, a ten-day job. A plea that I had moved 100 miles away and would have to make another special journey to pick it up cut no ice, and I was told 'That's not our problem'.

I would have been happy with a replacement mouse, but no, that had to be repaired as well. I left the shop minus my computer and very angry, made worse by reading an article in TGM about how reliable STs were!

I recovered my computer with a functioning mouse but a few months later the left button failed and the computer developed a power-supply problem. On this occasion I phoned the shop's repair department direct and they suggested they would try to repair it while I waited, which they did. They also told me they don't usually repair mice, since they just replace them with a new one...



So this letter is a warning. Find out before you buy what happens if your computer breaks down — it may happen to you!

Mark Fairweather, Dewsbury

Nobody's entitled by law to have equipment repaired free (unless it's faulty when you buy it, in which case it's covered by the Sale Of Goods Act). So always check the guarantee/warranty period when you buy something; and check the guarantee/warranty on any repairs, too!

Each month, Back Bytes lists about 20 specialist micro repair centres across the country, and they may often be more helpful than shops (whose main business is selling things, not mending 'em).

Finally, don't blame the ST for your mouse faults!

What, me violent?

Dear TGM
Playing a computer game involves coordination and dexterity of the eyes, brain and hands. Looking at a joystick being used to play doesn't seem to show much violence. Computer games transfer skill and concentration onto the screen as violence. Real violence, which involves physical force, involves no skill, it's just normally anger, adrenaline and a determination to destroy or overcome.

Seeing prisoners of war being shot during World War II on TV made me feel very uneasy — knowing that they were actually dead, really dead DEAD, is not a pleasant thought.

But while playing games (shoot-'em-ups etc) I'm being entertained. I know the difference. Reality is the key word.

Colin McGinley, Waterloo, Belgium

PS Before I go, I'd like to know something. In *Generation 4*, a French computer magazine, it said that British software houses were going to stop producing games especially for the Amiga, but just do porting from the ST, because of the amount of piracy on the Amiga.

Is this true? I have an Amiga and I'm worried.

Many software houses do port straight from the ST to the Amiga, and the piracy problem — which reduces sales of Amiga software, and thus makes special development a waste of money — is no doubt a contributing factor. But there's no question of everyone giving up on the Commodore machine.

The rest of your letter is an eloquent defence of so-called 'violent' games. Well said.

C16: Better than Amiga!

Dear TGM
I love reading TGM. I think it's the best magazine in the world! But I've only got a C16, and I think TGM would be ten times better if it had computers like the C16, MSX and Commodore Plus 4 in it.

You could have a different page for these computers. Who can afford an ST or an Amiga anyway? And if you cannot put these computers in, why have Spectrums in TGM? The C16 is only 32K less than a 48K Spectrum and 112K less than a 128K Spectrum.

The Spectrum computers all seem to have colour clash, which make them produce rubbish graphics! The C16 never has colour clash. So why not have it in this excellent mag?

Simon Ward, New Brighton, Merseyside



A 128K Spectrum: only 384K less than an Amiga,896K less than a 1040 ST, more keys than a calculator, and a helluva lot better than the C16. Maybe.

We do cover MSX, probably more than any other mass-circulation magazine in the western world. We don't cover C16 because hardly anyone's asked for it. If enough C16-owners write in with grovelling pleas, well, the matter will come under consideration at the next meeting of the Which Machines To Cover? Board (September 16 1993).

PANIC!

Dear TGM
Right, prepare to hear from my lawyers within the next week — this is pure victimisation, it's just too much, you've overstepped the line this time...

Not more than a week back, with immense glee and extreme anticipation, I joyfully

PRESS ANY KEY

skipped down to my local newsagent, with one thought in mind. So I rushed through the sticker-infected glass doors, looked wildly around, and then YES! one final copy of TGM**014** left. I quickly paid the over-priced sum of A$3.85 for this golden object, and then rushed madly home.

Upon arrival, I began a close examination of this holy object. Page 1... 10... 20... 30... all fine, but WHAT'S THIS? Pages 51 to 66 were for some unknown reason printed upside down and back to front.

Look, just because I reside down under (if there's one thing all Australians hate, it's jolly folk who can't stop using that stupid cliche) it doesn't mean we need a special upside-down section here!!!

But no, that wasn't the end of it — not only were pages 51-66 printed upside-down, they were also repeated, correctly I must add. I almost got a brain haemorrhage, because at one instant, page 57 seemed to be upside down compared to the rest, so I turned it over and went on, but now page 57 was the other way up... oh, how we do suffer for your mag.

Do you reckon my mag is worth something extra, like an incorrectly printed stamp? Only hoping.

Victor Zitser, Sydney, Australia

'It does happen on occasion,' says our Production Manager, flushing with embarrassment. Something to do with the binding machine getting carried away and snatching up two 16-page sections instead of one, apparently. Thing has a mind of its own. Read any Stephen King?

Cheap at three-quarters the price

Dear TGM

I was impressed by a US Gold advert which shows they have dropped their 16-bit prices to £14.99. I hope this will inspire other companies to drop their prices as well.

Mark Jones, Lowton, Lancashire

It's certainly encouraging news, but let's hope a price drop doesn't mean a drop in quality — so often the case when 8-bit budget started.

Is this the beginning of true 16-bit budget?

It will be interesting to see in a few months how well the £14.99 titles have sold compared with those which US Gold are keeping at the higher price. If there's no great difference, no doubt £14.99 will be phased out. So go buy 'em now while you can!

£50 WORTH OF SOFTWARE MUST BE WON!

There's £50 worth of software — your choice — for each month's Star Letter. Write to: Readerpage, TGM, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.

And rest assured that even if your letter doesn't get printed, it's been read and where necessary shown to all the TGM staffers who can use YOUR suggestions to improve the mag.

Piracy corner(ed)



Dear TGM

a) What happened to the article you promised us at the end of TGM**011** about a software raid in Glasgow? We did get an antipiracy article, but no details to deter potential pirates.

b) In my opinion, Rob Steel vastly underrated the *Zak McKracken And The Alien Mindbenders* adventure reviews in TGM**016**. This game is very amusing, contains a highly original plot and is aesthetically brilliant. What other game has such a brilliant opening sequence, and the option to speak to Elvis or turn into a yak? A mark of about 92-93% would have been a little more realistic.

c) You MUST realise that the Pen Pals section of the TGM Classifieds is used for getting contacts to swap copies of games. Surely TGM are not naive enough to not be able to interpret phrases like 'contacts wanted to swap games'. I can't imagine people sending originals through the post, so please be a little bit more strict when selecting adverts, or we'll all be up the spout.

d) Finally, well done for not printing any stupid letters about the ST vs the Amiga, as it's fairly obvious that the electronic 35-tune MFI doorbell can knock both of them senseless.

Keep up the good work, and other crawling cliches.

Grant Robson, Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire

a) Erm, that wasn't meant as a promise. It was a bit of late news. But we do plan another piracy expose in the near future — this time with more gory details.

b) Many people here agree with you about Zak. But not everyone WANTS to speak to Elvis, y'know...

c) Yes, we're well aware, and it's a much-debated problem here. The trouble is that it's administratively very difficult to reject people's ads when they've paid for them; the only other option is to close the Pen Pals section entirely, which would be another example of pirates spoiling things for everyone.

In the meantime, as part of the whole games industry's attack on piracy (TGM018 news), we're collecting information on pirates who respond to honest ads, and sending it to the Federation Against Software Theft. If anybody reading this has been contacted by a pirate through the TGM Classifieds, please send us a copy of the letter. You'll remain anonymous if you wish.

d) No, we think the Amiga is better.

In praise of simple minds

Dear TGM

There's no doubt that the best formula for games is simplicity. Of course, really complicated strategy games are good too, but they've got to be great from the start. Though I'm always on the look-out for games with good graphics and sound, I find that games like *Pipeline*, *Zak McKracken* etc are the best.

So, all you game publishers and developers out there: design a great game, and when you've done that then, and only then, incorporate the graphics and sound.

The problem with most 16-bit games is that game developers make the playability the last element in a game to worry about. That's why Spectrum games always work; the machine has no real graphics and sound capabilities, and therefore playability and game design are the only selling points.

Of course, there are good 16-bit games, but not enough. The problem is, the best games are usually the ones which aren't hyped much.

Paul Rothwell, Pijnacker, The Netherlands

This one will run and run. To be honest, Spectrum games don't always work at all — there have always been some dreadful ones. And some 16-bit games are brilliant (think of Populous, Voyager, Typhoon Thompson, Vindicators, War In Middle Earth).

A more serious threat, which many seem to have ignored, is that 8-bit games are trying to improve graphics and sound to compete with the 16-bits. And 8-bits have comparatively small memories. This could eventually mean the 8-bits lose gameplay too...

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UNCLE MEL'S TRIVIA QUIZ

1) What software houses can you unscramble from these table guests? **WE NOSH, SLIM C CRED EATER, NEAT VILE RAT, OH RENEE BUM SOUL**.

2) What bottled instruction is common to *Alice In Wonderland* and *Dragon's Lair*?

3) What effect did the first Russian Sputnik have on certain high-tech homes in the Fifties?

4) What does **ESPA** stand for? **a)** English Society of Piss Artists, **b)** Every Sucker Pays Andrew, **c)** Entertainment Software Publishers Association.

5) The longest surviving computer fanzine is about to cease publication. Name it.

6) Which of the following is Zog? **a)** A leading industrial city in Romania, **b)** a TGM writer, **c)** a mystery.

7) What did hackers advertise on the Certified Grocers of California bulletin board in 1988?

8) What are the Dumfries and Galloway police using an Amiga for?

9) What is a gigaFLOP? **a)** One billion floating-point operations per second, **b)** Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest musical, **c)** a Gremlin game.

10) Is Jeffery Armstrong better known as **a)** #aint #ilicon, author of the Binary Bible, or **b)** a complete a##hole?

11) Which idiot's contribution to the packaging for *Rock Star Ate My Hamster* resulted in the game being banned from Boots and WH Smith?

12) Who played the Doctor in the 1965 film version of *Doctor Who And The Daleks*?

13) Where did the name Dalek originate? (That's enough Daleks — Back Bytes Ed.)

14) What do Robert Maxwell, Chelsea Football Club, General Alexander Haig and Maureen the circus elephant have in common?

15) Which celebrity has been is featured on Ocean's Run The Gauntlet?

16) Name the holy connection between Paul McCartney's Lady, US Gold's Vigilante, and Mrs Sean Penn.

17) What does ROSIE provide for PCs? **a)** Book reviews, **b)** computer dating services, c) cups of weak tea.

18) Which Carry On star played the Beast in the 1983 cult movie *Krull*?

19) Which of the following did TGM lose at Paddington Station recently? **a)** A Sega Mega Drive, **b)** a bear, **c)** innocence.

20) What are mattes?

ANSWERS

1) Hewson, Electric Dreams, Alternative, Melbourne House. **2)** 'Drink me'. **3)** It opened electric garage doors as it flew overhead. **4) c)** No offence, Andy... **5)** *The Bug*. **6)** Well, two out of three ain't bad. **7)** Hard drugs, stolen credit cards and prostitutes. Unfortunately, the TGM Classifieds have since cornered the market. **8)** Lockerbie air disaster. **9) a)** And the latest Cray's can do 16 of 'em. **10)** Yes. **11)** Mel... er, um, guilty m'lud.... **12)** Peter Cushing. **13)** The spine of volume 'DAL to EK' of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. **14)** They all helped to promote Commodore computers. **15)** Martin Shaw. **16)** Madonna. **17)** Data on novels and poems. **18)** Bernard Bresslaw. **19) a)** And therefore **c)**. We reckon **b)** took it. **20)** A device that obscures part of an image in order to combine another image in the same frame (and not a brand of Richard Branson rubber devices).

The Games machine NEXT MONTH

VECTOR GRAPHICS

TGM exposes the myths and reality of using vector graphics. We talk to the people who program them and the people who buy the games which use them. Starglider 2, Carrier Command, Voyager and Bomber all use the impressive graphics-creating technique — have vector graphics pushed the 16-bits to their limits?

ASTAROTH, THE BEING

TGM talks to Hewson about the programming, production and publication of their latest 16-bit shocker, Astaroth. What does your sliver of silicon go through before it reaches your local software store?

Plus... 8-bit supremo Raf Cecco talks about the 16-bit market and why he's moving in to make a killing...

HOLD THE FRONT PAGE!

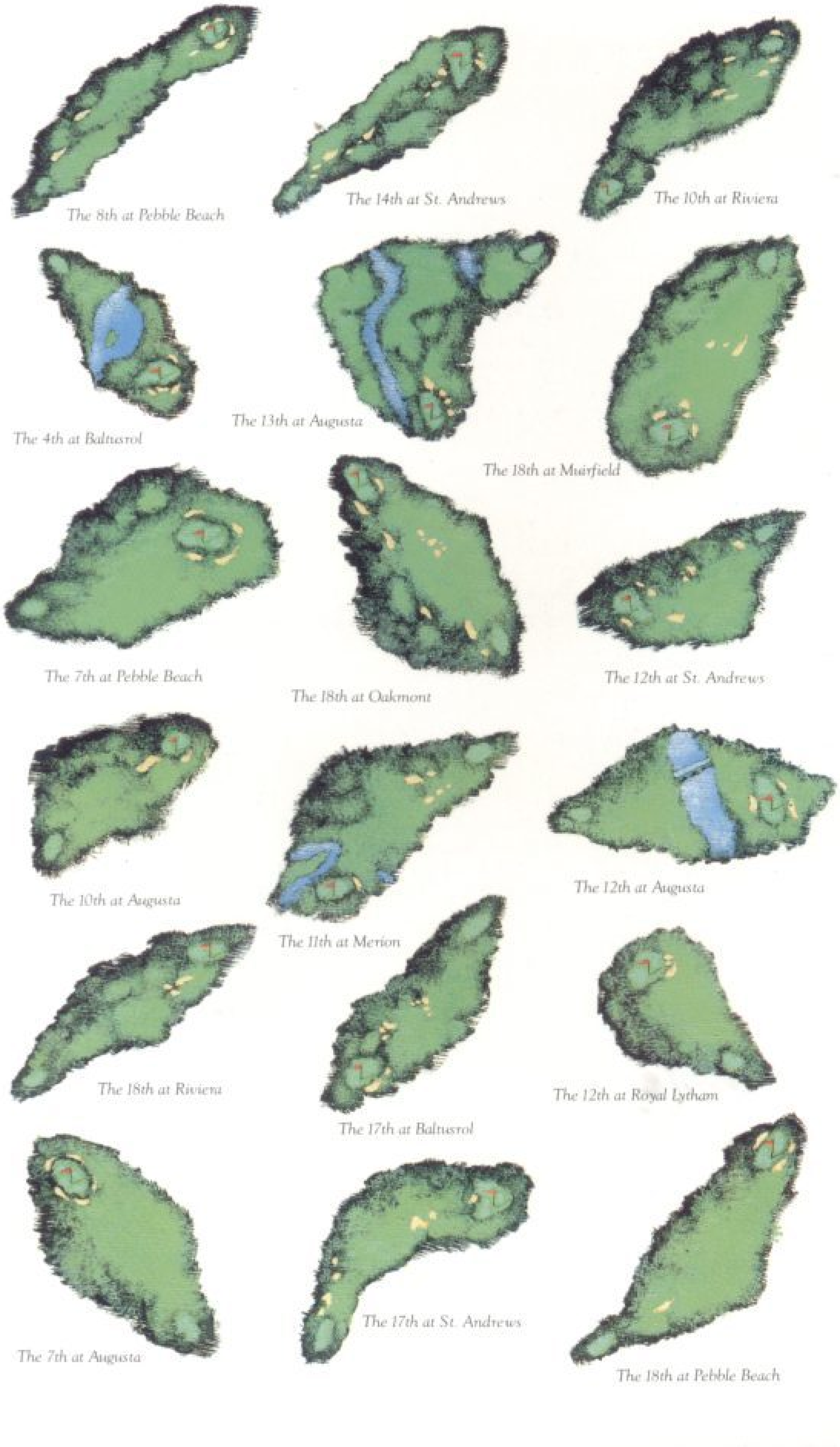
This issue of TGM was almost entirely designed and composed on a computer screen. On some pages even the four-colour photographs were electronically scanned, altered, colour separated, placed on the page and output from a Macintosh II — we believe this is the first time this has happened anywhere — and it happened first in TGM! Next month, we tell you exactly how TGM is pushing the frontiers of electronic publishing to the very outer limits of possibility, and soon how it could also be happening on your ST or your Amiga. **PLUS:** more and more games reviews, Back Bytes and comps... **TGM 020 is on sale from June 22 — don't miss it!**

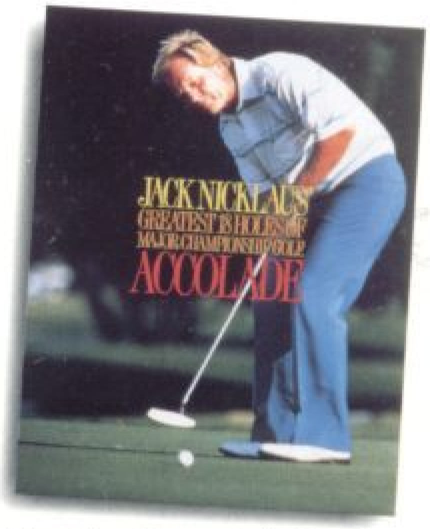
FORGOTTEN WORDS

Deadlines, like the poor, are always with us... even when we leave them out by mistake. If you're entering the Capcom/Forgotten Worlds comp on page 26, you're probably looking forward to years of painstaking research before you send the entry in and take up PC Engine gaming as a retirement hobby. But alas, that is not to be; the deadline we forgot to print is June 22, and entries received any closer to the crack of doom will be disqualified.

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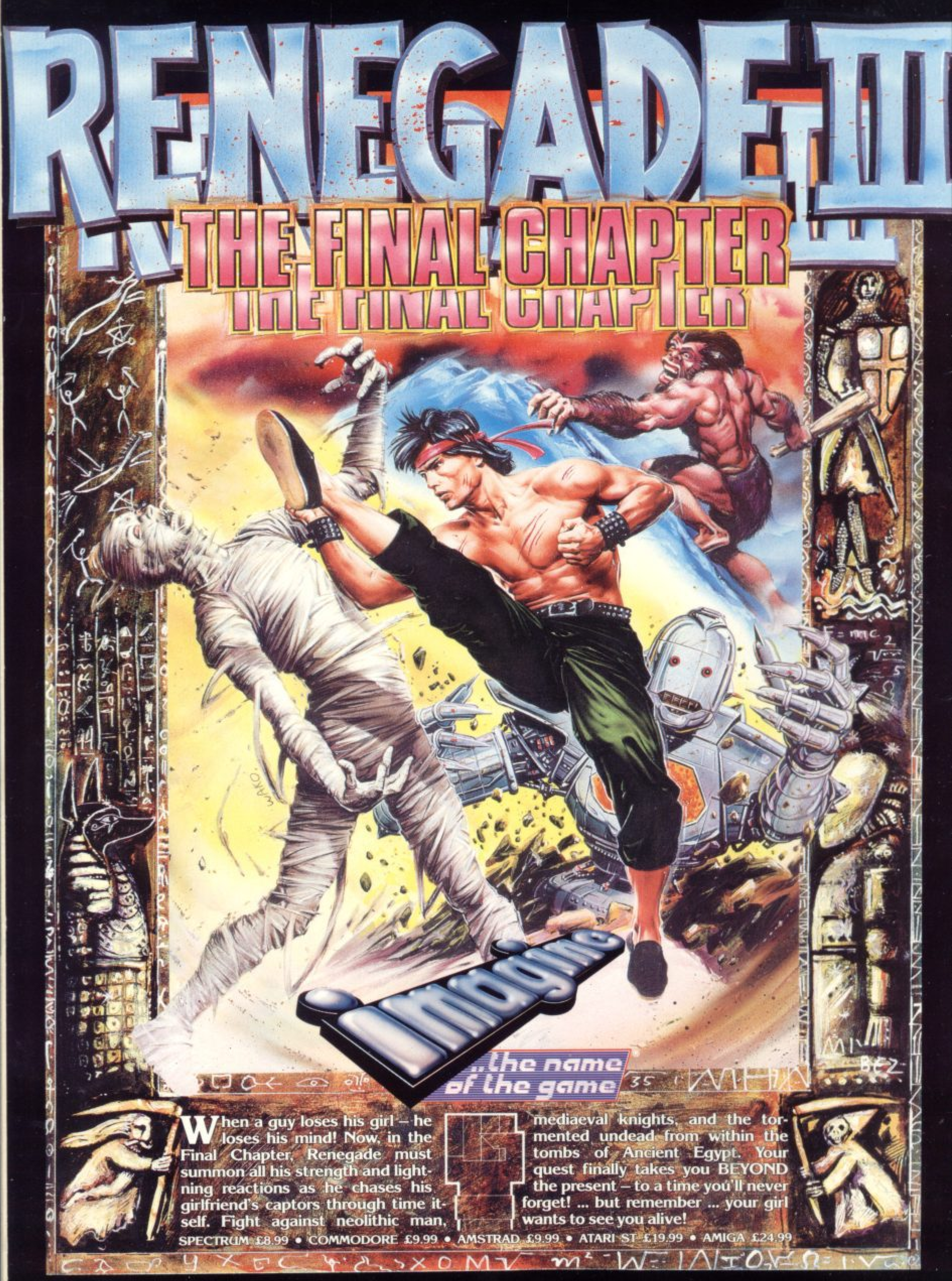
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